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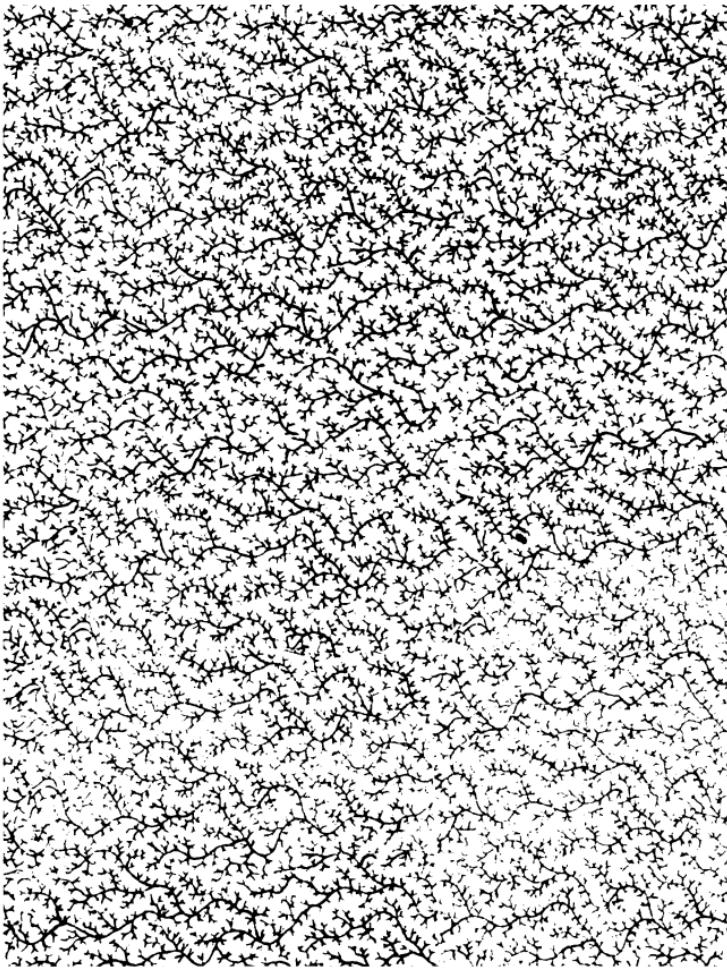
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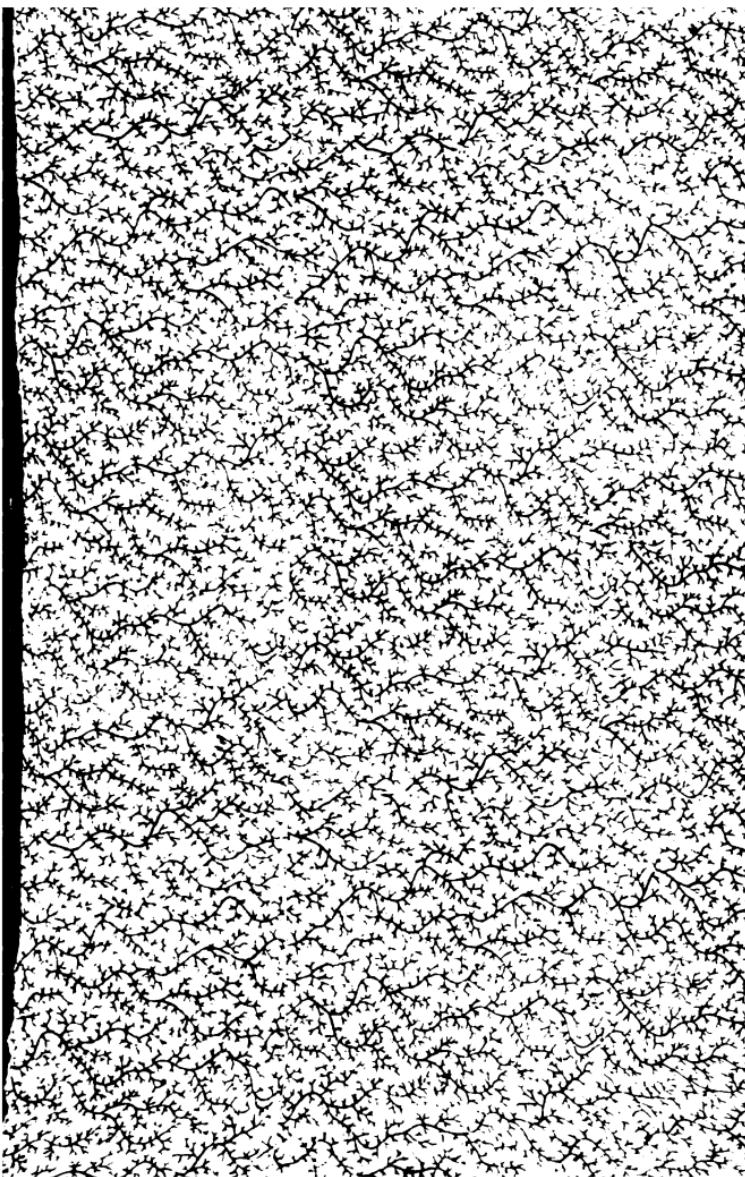
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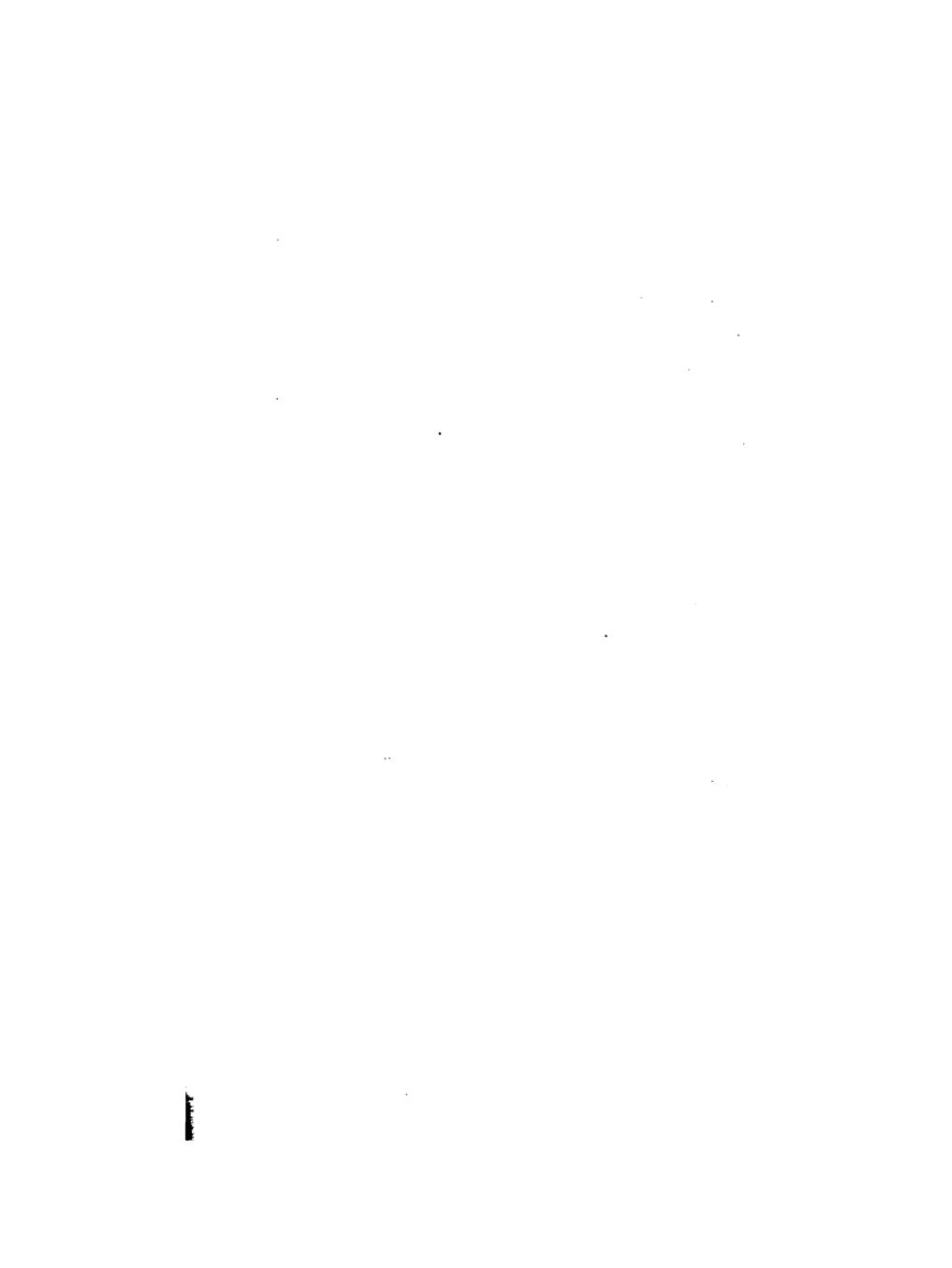
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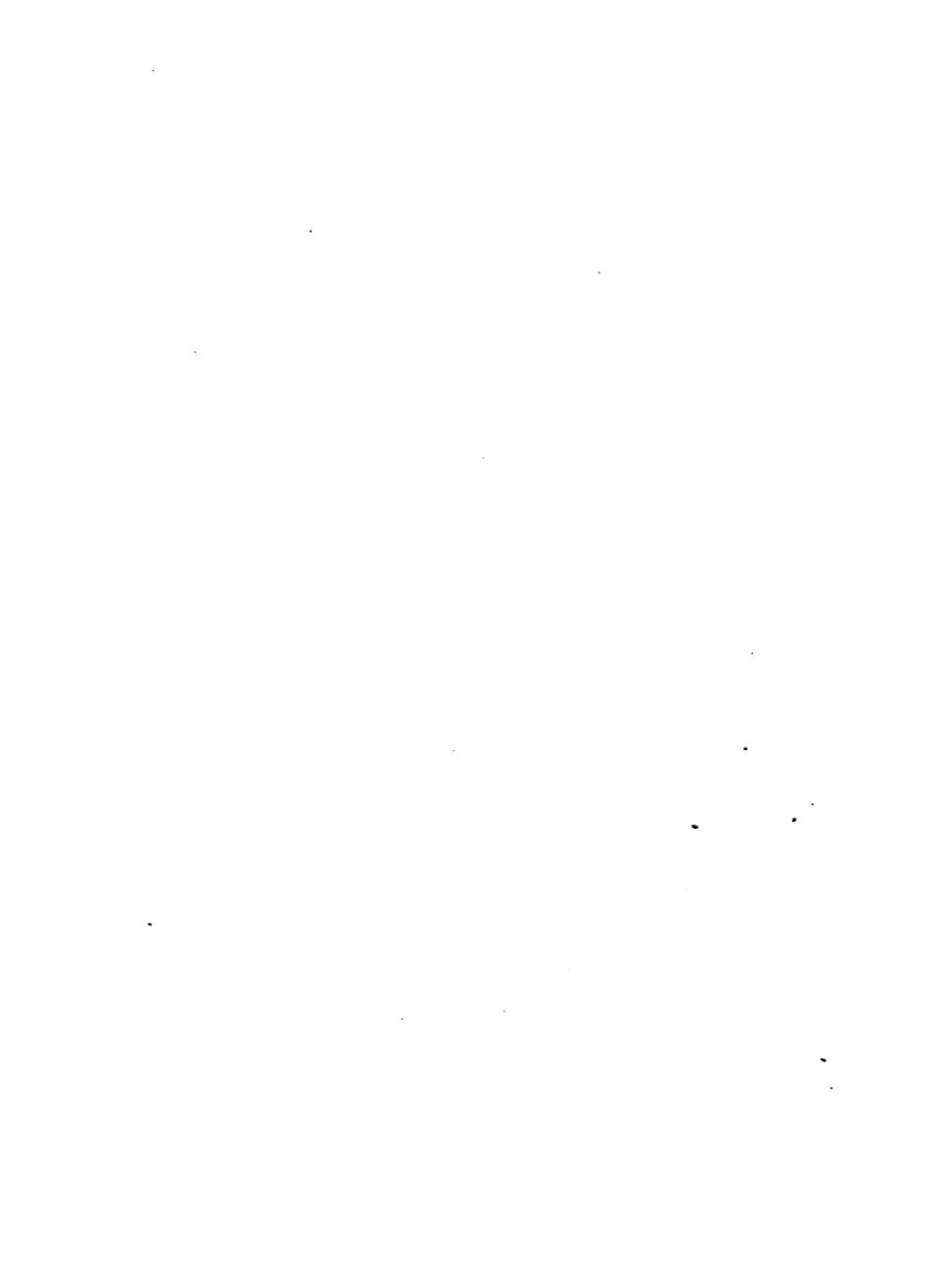


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# STUDIES FROM LIFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN.”

J. E. D. M. M. C. G. R. A. K.

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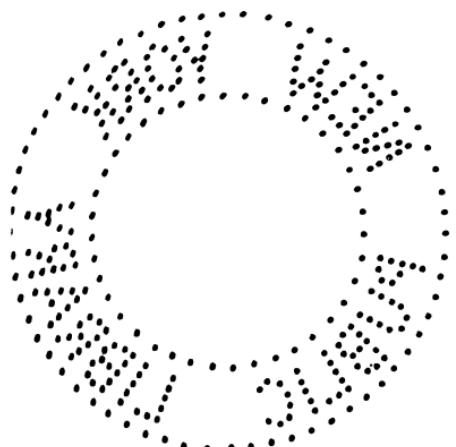
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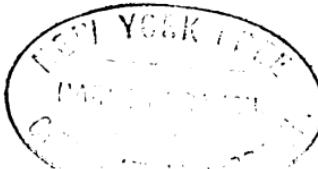
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## STUDIES FROM LIFE.

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### OLD STONES.

"NONSENSE! Who on earth would take such a journey,"—it was forty miles across country, or sixty odd if you went round by rail—"just to see a heap of old stones!"

So grumbled our host, whose "bark was waur than his bite," who always said the unkindest things and did the kindest. Of course we never fretted ourselves about the matter; we knew we should go.

It had been the dream of youth to us all, indulged hopelessly, for—well, I had better not say how many years; since, though to the youngest—now our merry hostess, and mother of our host's three boys—time did not so much matter, we two elders, who had not made quite such good use of it, might possibly be sensitive on the subject. Time? Pshaw! we plucked the old fellow by the beard and laughed at him, all three of us. He had only made us wiser, and richer, and merrier; we did not grudge him one year out of the many that have slipped away since we used to sit in short frocks and frilled

trousers and long plaited tails of hair—poring over Penny Magazines and juvenile Tours through England—which confirmed us, as I said, in the longing to see Stonehenge, of all places in the world—Our “world”; which then, in wildest dreams, extended not beyond the British Islands.

We never had seen it: not though, since then, some of us had gone up and down Europe, till we had come to talk of the Alps and Italy with a hand-in-glove familiarity quite appalling; though to others the “ends of the world” had at second-hand been brought so close that the marvellous Peter Botte mountain, about which we drank in so many (ahem!) fabulosities in the said Penny Magazine, and Cape Horn, of gloomy horror, and the delicious Pacific Islands, on which we so desperately longed to be cast away, as youthful Robinson Crusoes, had dwindled into every-day things. Yet still, still we had never seen Stonehenge.

As the idea was started, and we canvassed it over the tea-table, the dream of our girlhood revived; with all the delicious mystery and ingenious conjectures that attended it, and the wild hope—struck out of the infinite belief of youth in everything, and, above all, in itself—that if we only once got a sight of it, who knew but that we, actually we! might be the happy individual to set for ever at rest, by some lucky suggestion, the momentous question, Who built Stonehenge?

"A "heap of old stones!" We scouted the phrase with even youthful indignation; we protested that it had been the desire of our lives, that we would any of us cheerfully travel anyhow, anywhen, anywhere to see Stonehenge. Then, like wise women, we let the matter rest; we knew we should go.

Our plan germinated a day or so in wholesome silence, till we saw its first leaf peering above ground in the shape of a Bradshaw which, quite *par hasard*, our host was apparently studying.

"Oh!" observed he—a propos of nothing. "It would take a long day—a very long day."

"What would?" somebody said hypocritically.

"I thought you wanted to see Stonehenge?"

We smothered our joy; we were meek over our triumph; we even—as days were precious to the masculine portion of the household—acquiesced humbly in the proposal that we should "make a long day of it"—that is to say, from six A.M. to about twelve P.M., including a journey by coach and rail of about 110 miles, if even by these slightly arduous means we might purchase an hour or two among our "old stones."

Patience prospered; resignation won. The very next day we four—three womenkind, on whom, as we have passed the season when we care to be the three Graces, I may as well bestow, *pro tem.*, the names of the three Virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity—under escort of Hope's husband—found our-

selves clattering over the stones of our little town, which within two hours fully informed itself of our excursion and plans in all particulars, many of them quite unknown to ourselves. No matter; we were very happy, even when Fate, according to her custom—a wise one, doubtless—dashed our joys with a pelting rain, tore us from post travelling and from the breezy heaths—redolent for miles and miles of the apricot-scented gorse—to thrust us into a railway carriage, where we had our choice of being smothered or soaked. . . . .

Still po' matter: not though we had to make a *circumlocution* which would occupy the whole of the afternoon, and land us in Salisbury just time enough to go to bed: not though the delicious drive across country was put an end to, and we were jolted, and smothered, hungry, and wet (likewise dry, very!), labouring under every travelling woe, *except* ill-humour. As we laughed, our troubles lightened; and when towards dusk we saw, westward, a red streak peering through the dun-sky, and birds began to sing ou' cheerly in the green, dripping trees, we gloried in all our conquered disasters, for we said, “It is sure to be a fine day to morrow.”

And when opening the carriage window one of us heard, through the stillness of the rainy twilight,

The faint and frail cathedral chimes  
Speak time in music,

we felt, we knew, that we were near Salisbury, that to-morrow we should see Stonehenge.

No chance of the cathedral that night; but we saw above the houses its exquisitely delicate spire; and once again, as we sat over the welcomest of tea-suppers in the inn-parlour, we caught the chimes, "faint and frail;" and Hope, who used once to be the most romantic of us all, and in whom even matrimony had not quite suppressed that amiable weakness, took out boldly her pet poem, *The Angel in the House*, and declared her intention of rising at some unearthly hour next morning, to hunt out the dean's house, where it is supposed the "Angel" abode, previous to being caught and carried away to the author's. She would find it she knew in "Sarum Close:"

Red brick and ashlar, long and low,  
With dormers and with orielis lit:  
Geranium, violets, rose, array'd  
The windows, all wide open thrown,  
And some one in the study play'd  
The wedding-march of Mendelssohn.

Gathering all this admirable evidence for identifying —nothing! we laid our plans, took one peep out on the street, where the pavement glittered, shiny with rain, under the gas lamps, and above a queer black gable out peered the brightest, softest new moon—then we all went to bed as merry as children. Out upon old Time! were we not at heart

just as young as ever, and going to Stonehenge tomorrow?

AND WE WENT. I beg to chronicle this in capitals as a remarkable corroboration of the proverb, "Wish for a gown o' gowd, and ye'll aye get a sleeve o't;" and to show that people do sometimes gain what they wish—if they have patience to wait for it twenty years or so. We went.

It was an exquisite morning; fresh after the rain, breezy and bright, with clouds scudding now and then over the May sun, threatening us just enough to make us protest that we didn't care. It might rain, and welcome—in an hour or two—but we should be at Stonehenge. Even if we saw it—humiliating position!—from under umbrellas, see it we should and would.

So we dashed along the quiet morning street, where the respectable inhabitants of Sarum were just breakfasting, little recking of insane tourists, wild over their familiar "old stones." Even our driver, honest man as he took us through "the close and sultry lane" *vide Angel in the House*, which we again referred to—turned round once or twice, with a patronising air, to answer topographical questions and then cracked his whip solemnly, as if proud that he wasn't so foolish as some people!

Foolish indeed! but it was a holy intoxication brought on by the fresh, breezy, dewy light, bathin the whole spring-world. How beautiful was the

world! with the sky full of larks and the air of hawthorn-scent, with acres upon acres of champaign land green with growing wheat, waving and shimmering in the sun—a sea of verdurous plenty. How strange, like a bit of ancient history made visible, looked Old Sarum—a perfect Roman camp, with its regular lines and fosses now thick-sown with trees, amidst which, for centuries back, we learned, still lurked a house or two—no more.

“Yet that place,” remarked Hope’s husband, with severe modern practicality—“that place actually, till the Reform Bill sent two members to parliament!”

We laughed; and pondered how much the world had mended since the times of the Romano-Britons. And so drove on, to a perpetual chorus of larks—a chorus dropping upon us from the white clouds—who sang over us just as they sang over the heads of those grim warriors throwing up the green walls of Old Sarum.

Salisbury Plain. Familiar as a proverb the place is. Of a bleak spot one hears—“As bare as Salisbury Plain;” of being shelterless in the rain—“Might as well have been out on Salisbury Plain.” All images of dreary desolation and flat uniformity gathered around it; and one thinks of that celebrated hero of the Religious Tract Society, the “Shepherd of Salisbury Plain,” with a mixture

of sympathy and veneration. Yes, we were now on Salisbury Plain.

A strange place surely. Not flat, as we had expected, but rising and falling in long low waves of land—enclosed wheat-land for a considerable way; till fences and cultivation cease, and you find yourself in the midst of a vast expanse, lying bare under the sky, as far as eye can reach, in all directions—one undulating sea of intense emerald green. Nothing, except the sea, ever gave me such a sense of solitude, stillness, and desolation, quiet, not painful: nature's desolation is never painful. You hear no birds, for there are no trees to sing in; nay, the larks have ceased, or are heard indistinctly far away over the wheat-fields; an occasional bee alone comes buzzing over the short turf, the flowers of which, dainty, curious, and small, are chiefly of a scentless kind, such as saxifrage, tiny yellow lotos, and primrose-coloured hawkweed. Now or then, every mile or so, you see, lying at anchor in a hollow, or steering across the Plain like a fleet of white sails whose course you can track for miles, what you know must be a flock of sheep. Or you come upon them close, and the little brown-faced shepherd takes off his cap with a nod and a smile—and his shaggy dog just lifts up his lazy head to look at you: then you leave them all, flock, shepherd, and dog, to a solitude which seems as complete as that of an Arab in the desert or a ship far out at sea.

And this is Salisbury Plain; and in its centre lies that extraordinary circle of stones about which, let antiquaries prate as they will, nobody really knows anything whatever.

As we ascended and descended ridge after ridge of the waves of land, we all stretched anxious eyes, east, west, north, and south. Who would be the first to catch sight of Stonehenge? We scorned to inquire of the driver where to look; we felt sure we should recognize it at once; but on we went, and ever so many imaginary "old stones" did our satirical escort point out to our eager notice as the veritable Stonehenge.

At last he said, with a quiet air of unquestionable superiority, "That's it: there are your old stones."

"Where?"—"Oh, please, where?"—"Yes, where?" cried in different and yet concurring tones, Hope, Faith, and Charity—the latter being, mild even in her enthusiasm: she had seen Mont Blanc and a few other trifles.

"There!"

"Oh!"—"Ah!"—"Well!"

I grieve to confess that these ejaculations were—not enthusiastic! Did ever the thing attained seem in the moment of winning half so grand as when unattained, possibly unattainable? Nay, as our poetical friend observes—not *too* politely—of

his "Angel" (the book's corner peered still out of Hope's pocket):

The whole world's wealthiest and its best,  
So fiercely follow'd, seem'd, when found,  
Poor in its need to be possess'd,  
Poor from its very want of bound.

Alas! whether from the vastness of the Plain, which made the gigantic stones seem small from the want of something to compare them with; or whether youthful imagination had, like "vaulting ambition, o'erleaped its self," and fallen prone by the side of ordinary and possible fact—certain it is that nothing but the shame and dread of being crowded over by superior masculine wisdom prevented our confessing ourselves disappointed in our first sight of Stonehenge.

But afterwards, as often happens—and, let us hope, happened with our poet and his "Angel"—coming nearer, its grandeur and beauty grew upon us, till, by the time our horses stopped and drew up under the large shadow of one of the "Druid (?) rocks," we descended, silenced by their sublimity.

It has been described scores of times,—this extraordinary circle, or rather series of circles one within another, varying in size, from the outer stones, which are all of silicious sandstone, apparently about fifteen feet in height and six or seven in diameter—to the inner ones, of granite, and no beyond the size of a man—and the two great

centre trilithons, which still stand, erect and uninjured, over the large flat stone of blue lias which is supposed to have been the sacrificial altar.

These minutiae we neither observed nor heeded then. With an involuntary quietness, unbroken even by the sunshiny wind, rough enough to make hats weigh heavy on our minds and only too light on our craniums, and sharp enough to cause a glad recollection of lunch in a basket—in spite of these human weaknesses we all felt a certain awe on entering the “ancient solitary reign” of these gray stones, upright or prostrate, the mystery of which will probably never be revealed or discovered. We felt rather ashamed to run in and out among them and measure our height with them—puny mortals as we looked, the tallest of us!—energetically to clamber over the great fallen blocks and try to find out which was the identical spot upon which, year after year, the human victim must have lain, taking his last open-eyed gaze of the wide emerald plain and blue remorseless sky.

So would romance have dreamed; but Practicality, here predominant, soon set themselves—let me at once say *himself*—to calculate the height and weight of the “old stones,” and to invent a plan, by means of levers and earthworks, whereby, without any other machinery, even ancient Britons might have erected the trilithons and the outer circle,

in the uprights of which he soon discovered circular tenons, fitting exactly into the mortices carved in top stones, to prevent their sliding off.

“Clever fellows!” he observed, with the satisfied patronage of modern science. “Yes, those Druids were very clever fellows indeed.”

I hope their ghosts were gratified, if any lingered in the familiar temple, supposing it to be a temple, or that the Druids ever built it—which questions, and many more, we discussed over sandwiches and sherry, incensed by faint wreathes of odour from a weed which modern Britain worships as ancient Briton did the mistletoe, and, *en passim*, under excuse of which probably effects quite many human sacrifices. Here, though, it was harmless enough; harmless too were the jokes and laughter that broke the utter dead solitude of the place, until we dispersed to gather,—for ourselves or for our neighbours—small mementos of Stonehenge,—in the shape of moss, bits of broken stones and dainty wee flowers that perked up their innocent faces under the very shadow of the immemorial stones. Harmless and pretty too was the determined pertinacity with which Hope, bringing out her eternal book, caught Practicality’s coat-sleeve and insisted on reading aloud to him and us the idyl *Saint Plain*, which endeth thus appropriately:

By the great stones we chose our ground  
For shade; and there, in converse sweet,

Took luncheon. On a little mound  
 Sat the three ladies; at their feet  
 I sat, and smelt the heathy smell—

(“There’s no heath hereabouts—it’s all turf,” observed Practicality.)

“Pluck’d harebells—

(“Nor harebells neither. But then it might have been autumn-time,” mildly remarked Charity.)

Pluck’d harebells, turn’d the telescope  
 To the country round. My life went well,  
 That hour, without the wheels of Hope;  
 And I despised the Druid rocks  
 That scowl’d their chill gloom from above,  
 Like churls whose stolid wisdom mocks  
 The lightness of immortal love.

Immortal love! Yes, in this place, this dumb oracle of a forgotten world—this broken, dishallowed temple raised by unknown worshippers to a lost god—one felt the need of something immortal, something immutable, something which in one little word expresses the best of all good things, human and divine, and which in itself belongs to both.—And I think in heart or eyes, visible or invisible, we all had it and rejoiced in it there.

And now we were going, leaving a small token of affection in the shape of a paper of biscuits, and a neckless though not quite wineless bottle or two, for the aborigines, who had appeared from nowhere in particular, to meekly maunder about the stones, and offer us specimens, retiring abashed before we could get

out of them a syllable of conversation. But just ere departing we saw, half a mile off, winding slowly across the Plain towards us, a mysterious machine, half-wheelbarrow half-peepshow, with a man behind it—at least a big hat, which indicated a man underneath.

My good man—when you stopped, and in that business-like way took out your sketch-book, plans, curiosities, spread them in a sheltered nook, and began to lecture, in the most intelligent fashion I ever heard from any cicerone, on the antiquities of Stonehenge—you little suspected that one of those three innocent-looking ladies would ever put you in print! Not that I think you'll have the slightest objection to it, Mr. Joseph Browne of Amesbury—“twenty-four years attending illustrator of Stonehenge,” as your guide-book says (price one shilling, and worth two, for its extraordinary amount of intelligent fact and even more intelligent fiction). You are a great character, and long may you live to startle tourists with your apparition, and enlighten them with your discourse—a condensed edition of your guide-book, or rather your father's. Behold its title literatim!—

THE UNPREJUDICED, AUTHENTIC, AND HIGHLY-INTERESTING  
ACCOUNT  
WHICH THAT  
STUPENDOUS AND BEAUTIFUL EDIFICE,  
STONEHENGE,  
IN WILTSIRE  
IS FOUND TO GIVE OF ITSELF.

Therein is proved, to the author's satisfaction at least, the undoubted origin of Stonehenge. How it was the work of neither Romans, Celts, Druids, nor Phoenicians, but of antediluvians! How though, as the writer allows, "the difficulty in determining the situation of the abodes of those antediluvians who were concerned in the erection of the Serpent and Temple at Abury, of Silbury Hill and of Stonehenge, is very considerable," he brings a mass of evidence, wanting in nothing but a few slight premises to start from, and proves that the giants who were before the Flood could alone have erected the stones, which the Flood only could have thrown down. Of these antediluvians, their manners and customs, and general proceedings, domestic, social, and religious—"of the earnest desire that existed in Adam to perpetuate a knowledge of original sin," which he did in all probability by the erection of a great serpentine temple—(at Abury?)—"that hieroglyphic being fully adequate to so momentous an end"—likewise of the Deluge, and the course of its waters, "running as they are known to have done from the south-west to the north-east,"—of these and all other matters our author speaks with a decision, confidence, and familiarity quite enviable.

Nevertheless, despite one's smile at the ease with which "facts" can be accumulated into a great cairn of evidence over the merest dead dust of a theory which a breath would blow away, one cannot help

appreciating the exceeding intelligence and anti-quarian ingenuity of both Henry Browne, senior, and Joseph Browne, junior; and all visitors to Stonehenge will miss a great treat if they do not invest a shilling in the guide-book, and one or two more shillings in the acute explanations of the guide.

We did so; left him beaming with satisfaction and bowing till the big hat nearly touched his knees—in manners, at least, our friend might have taken lessons from his favourite antediluvians—then we rolled slowly over the smooth soft turf, often looking behind till the great gray circle lessened and lessened, and finally dropped behind one of the green ridges.

“You can’t see it any more.”

“I wonder if we ever shall see it any more.”

Charity “was afraid not;” Hope thought “she should like to bring her boys here when they were old enough to understand it;” Faith—did what Faith always does, and let the question bide. One thing however was certain, that we should in all human probability never be all here again as now. In mortal life are renewals sometimes, very happy ones; but no repetitions—no “second” times. Each pleasure as well as each pain stands by itself; and though the new thing may be ten times better than the old, still it cannot be the very thing—that is gone for ever, as is right it should go.

We knew well—and in spite of our laughter

think we felt—that though we might all live to be old men and old women, and see many grand sights up and down the world, we should never again have a day exactly like this our day at Stonehenge.

"Well, do you want to see any more 'old stones?'"

Of course we did. We had not dragged our benevolent Practicality all that distance from his home and work to let him off with anything short of the utmost we could get out of him. Besides, some of us rising early had already given glowing descriptions of what, not having been one of the beholders, I dare not attempt to paint—Salisbury Cathedral and Close, under the aspect of seven A. M. and a sunshiny morning. And some others of us had, from the first dawning of the plan, set our heart with a silent pertinacity which is not often beaten into anything, on seeing all that could be seen and told about the said cathedral.

So, after a few carnal but not unnecessary arrangements at the inn with reference to lamb and asparagus, we sallied forth again into Salisbury street—what a quaint, pretty old town it is!—and passed under the heavy gateway which shuts out from the world the quiet sanctities of Salisbury Close. We

Breathed the sunny wind that rose  
And blew the shadows o'er the spire,

And toss'd the lilac's scented plumes,  
And sway'd the chestnut's thousand cones,  
And fill'd our nostrils with perfumes,  
And shaped the clouds in waifs and zones,  
And wafted down the serious strain  
Of Sarum bells—

Not exactly yet, as it was before service-time. Otherwise the picture was just as we beheld it that 26th of May, 1857.

Of all English cathedrals perhaps Salisbury most merits the term "beautiful." Its exquisite lightness, whiteness, and airy grace, set in the midst of a wide and open Close, sometime turf, but now one golden ocean of wavy buttercups,—and belted in by a square walk, where chestnut and lime trees of thickest foliage overhung the path and half shadowed the old houses and small bright gardens;—its glittering windows and flying buttresses, from which one's gaze wandered to the most delicate of spires, tapering up till it vanished into nothing in the broad blue—I feel it is impossible to describe—I can only shut my eyes and dream of—this first vision of Salisbury Cathedral.

We sauntered slowly along the path through the field of buttercups; far better than a field of tomb stones;—as it was for centuries. Until bold Bishop Barrington on one momentous night sent an army of workmen, who before daylight had levelled the whole, laying each tombstone carefully over its proper grave; only—four feet below the surface instead,

upon it! How the good people of Salisbury must have stared and stormed, and been scandalized; but the deed was done, and could not be undone; the turf grew green, the dead slept quietly and unharmed, and ceased to be what Providence never meant them to be, though man has tried hard to make them—a burden, a terror, or a destruction to generations of the living. Now there are no more burials in Salisbury Close, and very few even in the cloisters.

Passing through the nave to the chapter-house, we entered these cloisters. Others elsewhere are grander—Gloucester for instance—but here again it may be doubted whether any can compete with Salisbury in beauty. This covered cloister-walk encircles a space open to the sky, with (I think) only two yew-trees planted in it. The verger told us that the late bishop took great pride in it; and after his wife was buried there would not allow even a daisy to mar the exquisite green of the turf, but paid old women to go and pick them every morning. His three family tomb-stones are the only tombs allowed; over all the other graves are tiny tablets let into the level grass; and so narrow is the space that each grave is required to be dug coffin-shaped. Through the lately-mowed turf, we could trace still in more than one spot this familiar outline—never to be looked upon without a certain awe.

We entered the chapter-house, which is being

restored by subscription, as a tribute to this late bishop's memory. Here again the exquisite airiness of Salisbury architecture struck us. This great, lofty, circular chamber—chapel almost—is entirely supported by one centre pillar, or rather cluster of united pillars, from which all the arches spring. You stand under it as under some slender palm-tree, and look up wondering at its aerial lightness, its ineffable grace. Nor even when overpowered by the extreme ornamentation of the "restored" building (one of us suggesting that the restorer had better have left it alone, was quite annihilated by the verger's—"Indeed!—you think so, madam!") do we lose this sense of the unity and simplicity which constitute a perfect form of beauty.

"Rather different from Stonehenge. Quite a variety in old stones," observed our escort, after examining and recognizing the Purbeck marble and pavement of Minton's tiles—admirable modern imitations of the antique.

Yes—it could not fail to set us pondering how

The One remains—the many change and pass.

The ONE, whom Shelley knew not, or knew so dimly; whom, ignorantly and blindly, all earthly generations have in divers manner striven to adore; in all manner of temples—from these rude stones of Stonehenge, so placed that the sun rising in his place upon the longest day—and only then—

shall strike through the gateway on to the ~~which~~ <sup>h</sup>ich ~~the~~ <sup>h</sup>ial stone—to this fair cathedral, upon which the ~~advices~~ <sup>adv</sup>ices of man's brain and hand, through six hundred years, have been lavished, to glorify in material shape the Immortal, whose glory the whole earth and heavens cannot contain.

We trod lightly, as instinctively one treads on "consecrated ground": consecrated not by mere human episcopal benediction, but by the worship of centuries, devout, if erring, sincere, though in many things blind. We heard the traditions of the place—saw the usual cross-legged, broken-nosed Crusaders; the boy-bishop who in the midst of his mummeries ate himself to death—poor little rogue!—was buried with all canonical honours, and whose tiny effigy may be seen to this day; the skeleton monk—who still lives in stone, to impress beholders with a wholesome terror of mortality and corruption. With these wonders, and a score more, we regaled our curiosity; till a few living figures, quaint and quiet, such as one always notices in cathedral towns, entered a little door and stole prayer-book in hand along the nave towards the choir; while over our heads far up as it were—the service-bell began to toll dreamily and slow.

We had no time to stay longer. So out into the open air! Passing through the door at the great west front, we turned back to look at it; and though

united in church architecture, stood in its raw decorative work, endlessly varied; a little bold, happy sparrow hopped up and in or out, as if the whole of Salisbury were made for him to build his nest in we walked slowly round the Close, in one which a group of boys were just quitting the uneclesiastical game of cricket, and dispersing either for school or prayers. We passed through the gateway, leaving the bell tower and the clouds still floating over the air the May winds still rustling the chestnut waving the buttercups, and the sunshine into almost unimaginable whiteness and beauty Cathedral.

Finally home; in the cool of the day right across country, a country purely English parks where the trees stood one by one pyramids of green, with their branches sweeping the ground; past rich fields dotted with white cows, ruminating in the grass or knee-deep in a pond, too lazy to do more to us the mild, calm, sleepy gaze whence calls Juno "the ox-eyed;" through quiet villages which children and old women gaped at open doors, where every cottage had a porch every porch was a mass of woodbine or Clematis A drive not easily to be forgotten; from the pictures it gave of one's own country—one'

everyday, living and breathing England, which with all her faults we fondly believe to be

Beloved of Heaven o'er all the world beside.

Finally, as I said, home; to find the children asleep; and sit for an hour or so at a quiet fire-side, alking over all our doings, which will serve for alk still when we are all gray-headed, and the 'little ones"—probably six feet high—may be aken—I beg their pardon, may take *us* to see Stonehenge.

"Well, have you on the whole enjoyed your Old Stones?"

I should rather think we had!

## SILENCE FOR A GENERATION.

“Of making many books there is no end.”

A DICTUM has been lately reported of the great monologuing moralist of our times—the modern Samuel Johnson of adoring English Boswells, American Goldsmiths, and aristocratic Mrs. Piozzis. And since authors cannot be expected to write one thing and say another, the sentence may probably be found in print; though, alas! vainly could type emulate that ponderous monotonous roll of long-drawn vowels and harsh resolute consonants, which gives to the said moralist’s speech even more originality than his pen.—“Sir,” said he, “the one thing wanted in this world is silence.] I wish all the talkers had their tongues cut out; and all the writers had their pens, ink, and paper, books and manuscripts, thrown into the Thames; and there were silence for a generation.”

One, not a disciple, might suggest that the illustrious author had better set the example; and satirically begin to calculate the amount of possible loss to the world by such a proceeding. Nevertheless, a great and wise man’s most foolish sayings are

likely to contain some wisdom; and the above sentence deserves consideration, as involving certainly an ounce of solid truth in a bushel of eccentric extravagance.

Silence for a generation. What a glorious state of things! No authors and no reviewers; no orators, political, controversial, or polemical, and no critics on oratory; no newspapers; no magazines; no new novelists to be advertised up, no new poets to be bowled down; travellers to wander and never relate their adventures; men of science to make discoveries and be unable either to communicate or to squabble over them; philanthropists allowed to speculate at will on the abuses of society so long as they concealed their opinions; in short, the world to return to the ante-Cadmus period—and compelled, in familiar but expressive phrase, “to keep itself to itself, and never say nothing to nobody.”

What a wondrous time! what a lull in the said world's history! Even to dream of it, sends through the tired nerves and brain a sensation of Elysian repose.

Silence for a generation—which generation of people, great or small, clever or stupid, should be born unheralded, grow up unchronicled, live uncriticised, and die unbiographised. It should feel, without discussing its feelings; suffer, without parading its sufferings; admire, without poetising its admiration; condemn, without printing its condemna-

tions. Its good and ill deeds should spring up as naturally as the flowers and weeds of a garden—to be left “all a-growing and a-blowing,” or quietly pulled up. All this busy, gabbling, scribbling self-analysing, self-conscious society should be laid under a spell of hopeful dumbness—forced to exist simply, exempt even from the first axiom of metaphysics: “I think, therefore I am.”

Such a state of universal silence, who would welcome? Possibly nobody; least of all those who have really nothing to say.

What in that case would become of the innumerable shadowy throng who haunt every periodical; answered and “unread correspondents,” authors of whom a luckless editor once cried out to the present writer in a sort of hopeless despair—Don’t say you’re bringing me another manuscript! Look there! I’ve got a heap of them two yards high.”

And you, ye cumberers of publishers’ shelves, in print and out of it, inditers of novels that nobody reads, poetry that nobody understands, and mental miscellanea that may be briefly ticketed as “Rubbish: of no use to anybody except the owner”—what would be your sensations? You too, young and ardent thinkers, so exceedingly anxious to express your thoughts by word or pen; as if nobody had expressed the like before, and the world, as you honestly and devoutly believe, would be the better for that expression—truly, rather hard upon you would fall

this compulsory silence. For you cannot yet see that, great as literature is, it is merely the fitful manifestation of the world's rich inner life—its noblest thoughts, its most heroic deeds; that this life flows on everlasting and untiringly, and would continue to flow, were there no such things as pens, ink, paper, and authors; types, printers, booksellers, and publishers.

Wofully would such a crisis affect a race of *littérateurs*, far, far below these, who pursue authorship simply as a trade, without the slightest faith in it or reverence for it—who, happening to have been born or brought up in what is termed “literary circles,” possess hereditarily or through long habit a certain aptitude with the pen, and accordingly make it a business tool with which to write anything or everything, no matter what, so that, like any other tool, it suffices to earn their daily bread. What would become of these, who, like most gabblers, prate, not out of their fulness, but their emptiness, if there were an age of silence?

There is another class as heavily to be condemned, and yet more pitiable—the authors,—real authors, not bookmakers,—unto whom such a law would teach what they have not the moral courage to teach themselves, the timely necessity of silence. How many lamentable instances do we know of these writers who have written themselves out, yet still go on writing.

For example: a book appears, it has merit; it succeeds, and deserves to succeed. Its author rises into note, becomes a man whom coteries seek; whom the public flatters and esteems, whom publishers bargain with, urge, and sue. His wares are valuable, consequently the more he produces of them the better. Money follows fame: and expenses follow money. He who wrote at first because he loved it, and could not help it, now writes for a living; or if he wrote at first for a living, now writes for an income—the handsome income which a man of talent can so willingly enjoy and so readily spend. People say: "What a deal of money Mr. So-and-so must make!"—as possibly he does; but they forget *how* he makes it. Not out of so many hours *per diem* of handwork or mechanical headwork, of ingenious turning of capital, or clever adaptation of other people's ingenuity. All his capital, all his machinery, all his available means of work, lie in a few ounces of delicate substance, the most delicate in the whole human structure, wonderfully organised, and yet subject to every disorganisation, mental or material, that chance may furnish—his brain.

People do not recognise this—perhaps he does not recognise it himself. He may be a very honest man, deserving all his fame and all his money. Yet both must be kept up; and how does he do it? He goes on writing for a long time—faithfully, carefully.

and well, having respect both to the public and his own credit.

[But Providence allows to every intellect only a certain amount of development, limited by certain laws, spiritual and physical, known or unknown, yet not one of which can be broken with impunity.] The brain is like a rich quarry; you may work it out in a year, or you may, with care and diligence, make it last a life-time; but you cannot get out of it more than is in it; and work as you will, you must get to the end of the vein some day. So does our author; but still—he writes on.

He must write; it is his trade. Gradually, he becomes a mere trader—traffics in sentiment, emotion, philanthropy. Aware of his own best points, he repeats himself over and over again. How can he help it? He *must* write. But whether he knows it or not, he has written himself out. For the rest of his career, he lives on the shadow of his former reputation—letting fall, perhaps, a few stray gems out of that once rich storehouse of his brain; or else he drops at once, a burnt-out candle, an oilless lamp, vanishing into such utter darkness, that for a long time, until perhaps posterity judges him more fairly, it is almost doubted whether there was ever any light in him at all.

This truth—fellow-authors, is it not a truth?—could be illustrated by a dozen instances, living as

well as dead, did not charity forbid their being chronicled cruelly here.

Such things, befalling not ignoble but noble minds, do indeed force us to see some sense in our severe moralist's impossible ultimatum. But surely it is worth pausing to consider whether the evil which he deplores could not be cured by less arbitrary means than an age of silence?

The time is gone by when literature was a merely ornamental craft—when unsuccessful authors were Grub Street drudges, and successful ones some patron's idle hangers-on, or perhaps independent patrons themselves. Gone by also, except in very youthful and enthusiastic minds, is the imaginary ideal of "an author"—a demigod not to be judged like other men, and entirely exempt from reprobation, whether he attain the climax of fame, or groan under the life-long wrongs of unappreciated genius.

Happily, in these days, we have very little unappreciated genius. Go round the picture exhibitions, and depend upon it you will find a large proportion of the really good pictures marked "sold." Inquire of any magazine editor, and he will tell you that he is only too thankful to get a really powerful and original article, no matter who writes it; that such papers will always command their fair price; and that the sole reason of their rarely illuminating his pages is, the exceeding difficulty of obtaining them. Ask any publisher of honour, credit, and

iberality—as the majority of them are—and he will own, that though a bad book may be puffed into factitious notoriety, and a good book remain temporarily unknown—given each a fair chance, and both are sure to find their own level, ay, sooner than the world imagines. There never was an era in literature, in which an author might be more sure of finding—the only thing an honest author would desire—“a fair field and no favour.”

Any writer of genius, nay, even of available talent, will always be able sooner or later to earn a livelihood by the pen. We repeat, meaningly, a *livelihood*. Whether, hapless instrument! it will suffice to give dinners to millionaires, and furnish white gloves and velvet gowns for countesses’ assemblies—whether it will, in short, supply to the man or woman of letters all the luxuries of the merchant-prince, and all the position of ancestral nobility, is quite another question—a question as solemn as any writer can ask himself. Alas for him, if neither he nor those for whom his pen is the bread-winner have the moral courage to reply!

In one sense, there is a great deal of cant sympathy and idle enthusiasm wasted upon authors and authorship. Noble as literature is, it is nevertheless no mere picturesque recreation; it is a profession, a calling,—a trade if you will,—to be pursued in all love and reverence, but as steadily, honestly, and tionally as any trade. You would laugh at a

workman who threw away his materials; you would blame a merchant who rashly expended his capital; you would turn away, as from something dishonest, from a shopkeeper who tried to foist upon you goods inferior to those you expected him to sell and wished to buy; and yet all these acts, under fine names, are sometimes perpetrated by authours. How is it that they and their belongings are so slow to recognise the meanness, the actual dishonesty—for it is fraud, not against the public only, but against his own soul and its Maker—when not for daily bread, but for “position,” “society,” “keeping up a family,” and all the pegs on which excuses can be hung, an author goes on writing, writing, long after he has got anything to say.

For what is it that constitutes the author, as distinguished from the rest of the world, who live, suffer, and enjoy, in a placid unconscious dumbness? —It is because he is the loosened tongue of all this mute humanity. Because, somehow or other, he knows not how or wherefore, he feels a spirit stirring within him, teaching him to speak; and he must speak. In himself he is no better—often, alas! less good—than the hundreds and thousands of silent ones; yet in this he is set apart from them all—he is *the speaker*. Art, nature, with all their mysteries, by others only felt, are by him understood. It may be that into most things he sees a little farther than most people; but whether or not,

to the extent that he does see, has been given him the power to arrange and demonstrate, which has not been given to them. Without any vain-glory or self-exultation—God knows how little there is to exult over!—every true author must be conscious of this fact,—that by some strange peculiarity, as incomprehensible to himself as to any one else, it has been granted him to express what others only experience—that whether the sound be small or loud, clear or harsh, he is the living voice of the world.

Then in God's name let him dare not ever to open his mouth unless he has something to say.

Rather, infinitely rather, let him live moderately, feed plainly, eschew fashionable frivolities and expensive delights as he would the allurements of that disguised individual whom St. Anthony's honest tongs seized by the beautiful nose. Let him turn his back upon adoring crowds who would win him from his true vocation of the worker and thinker, to that of the mere idler. Let him write, if needs must, for his daily bread—an honourable and lawful act; but as soon as he begins to write for his mere pleasures and luxuries, or for the maintenance of a certain status in the world—let him pause. And as soon as he feels himself writing, not because he is impelled thereto, having something to write about—but because publishers and public expect him to write about something—or worse, because money is to be made and writing a book is the only

way to make it—let him stop at once and cry: “Get thee behind me, Satan. How shall I dare to prostitute my gifts—not for necessary bread and cheese, but for things which are not necessary, riches, show, and notoriety.”

Better let him live on this honest bread and cheese, reducing his wants to the narrowest limit; nay, better slip from the world of letters altogether into kindly obscurity, than go on—scribble, scribble, scribble—flooding the public with milk-and-water mediocrity, reducing the noblest calling under the sun to mere journeyman’s taskwork, and degrading himself, his subtle intellect or brilliant imagination, to the condition of a spiritual suicide. For he has murdered worse than his body—his genius, his moral faculties, his soul.

And *cui bono?*

To most professional authors this question at times presents itself forcibly. What is the use of literature? What is the good of writing at all, when the noblest of fictions, the grandest of poems, or the purest and most elevating of psychological disquisitions, is at best but a faint reflex of what is going on in the world continually? If that same world could only perceive it, its own simple and natural existence in joy and grief, struggle, action, and endurance, is a higher thing than all imaginary representations or intellectual analyzations thereof. Do we not, we authors, continually see living pic-

ures lovelier than any we can portray—ideals which, if transferred literally to paper and print, readers would never believe in? Do we not, creating our imaginary world—which the aforesaid reader may happen to think pleasant and fair—often smile at him in secret, while of ourselves and for ourselves we cannot choose but sigh? What nonsense, what execrable travesty, all stage-paint, insel, and canvas, frequently appears this fictitious arena in which we make our puppets move, compared to the realities around us! How small seem our got-up tragedies—how shallow our feigned passions—how paltry our imaginary pathos, when we look at this, God's world, filled with men and women of His making; where we meet, as we do continually, scenes beyond all painting; characters of variety inexhaustible; histories that in their elements of terror, pathos, heroism, tenderness, put to shame all our feeble delineations. Daily do we feel that so far from trying to reproduce it, we are hardly worthy to look in the face of it, this ideal beauty, this infinite perfection—which however disguised and corrupted, unseen or unrecognised, is the central essence of all the wonderful world.

And sometimes we would fain it were so left and not written about; that

Love, and beauty, and delight,  
Whose might  
Exceeds our organs, which endure  
No light, being themselves obscure—

might rest in heavenly shadow, safe from poets, who vainly seek to imitate the inimitable; that vice might perish out of the perishable; her own corruption, undescribed, and unexpressed; that virtue were left to dwell unconscious in ease, without being startled by the sight of her lovely image—very badly copied, and possibly what out of drawing.

Ay, and oftentimes, especially of days such as this on which we write, when birds are singing, green leaves budding, and all nature bursting into redundant life—innocent of authors, publishers, and books, do we authors long for a brief season of celestial silence—to lie down and dream out of order, arrangement, or even consciousness—dreams; to gaze, enjoy, observe, and act, naturally and involuntarily; to live, and see all around us, the life of a mere flower of the field.

Even as Wordsworth, the charm of whose verse is this power of making himself “one with nature,” recalling how

“I wandered lonely as a cloud  
Which floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
Till all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host of golden daffodils:  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze;”

so that ever afterwards

“In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon the inward eye,  
Which is the bliss of solitude—

Wordsworth himself can find no other form in which to define this exquisite sensation of mere existence without consciousness of existence, than that drawn from his flowers:

“And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.”

—Truly, this sort of writing bids us pause in our demand for silence. It makes us feel that there *may* be some good in authorship; that genius, the power which by means of a few inches of black type and white paper, can reconvey to the human mind all its passions, emotions, and aspirations—can retranslate to it the whole beautiful and immortal life of the universe—this genius must be a wondrous gift—a divine possession. Let those who have it, hold it—intact, unalienated, unsquandered, undefiled.

And for those who have it not, there is little to repine. They possess most of its benefits, safe from its dangers and tribulations. Any man who can enjoy a fine poem, feel his heart strengthened by a good novel, and his spirit refreshed by a few pages of wholesome writing, rich in that true humour which is such a lightener of the heavy burdens of life, is as great and happy as the author—if he only knew it. Let him rejoice and be thankful; he also has been in Arcadia.

For the rest, sorry pretenders to literature—vain chattering pies who really have no song to sing, and

only desire to hear the clatter of their own sweet voices—let them be! No need to have their small tongues cut out, or their luckless manuscripts tied up in a bundle, and flung into the Thames or any other river. A few years will end all their clamour in an unbroken and eternal silence; and their works, designed to float down the stream of time, will soon sink to the bottom by their own ponderosity, and afflict its waters no more. *Requiescant in pace!* All things find their own level very soon. The world will do extremely well even without Silence for a Generation.

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## GOING OUT TO PLAY.

WHO that has lived to middle age, when to work has become the principal object of existence, does not look back with an amused interest, a half-melancholy wonder, on that season when "going out to play" was an acknowledged daily necessity; when we sallied forth with no pretence of duty or labour, neither to walk, nor ride, nor pay visits, nor do errands; bent on no definite scheme of action—going out simply and absolutely "to play?" And those Saturday afternoons—those glorious whole holidays—those delicious accidental half-hours, form the largest feature in our recollections now.

Going out to play! It seems ludicrous to fancy ourselves ever doing such a thing—we, who have to tramp in and out of town on our daily business—and do it; or feel we are bound to pay a visit—and pay it; that it is our duty to take a constitutional walk—and we take it; to plan a pleasure-excursion—and we solemnly go through with it. But as for turning out of doors for a given space of time, to go nowhere and do nothing particular—what a ridiculous idea it has become! Only by a long effort of mental transposition and retrograda-

tion can we sympathise with a certain dear little soul of my acquaintance, who after being sedulously petted and entertained for a whole week by a household of benevolent grown-up people, said pathetically

“Me want to go out and play! Me want a ‘ittle girl to play with me! Me should n’t care if she w a ‘ittle girl in rags!”

In this play companionship is the great main—companionship based on quite different grounds from that of later life. Except a few, endowed with that passionate adhesiveness which is sure to prove in after-life at once their blessing and their torment, children are seldom either unselfish or devoted to their attachments. Most of their loves are mere likings, contracted for the pleasure of the moment. Their dear little free hearts need neither a friend nor a lover—they only want “somebody to play with.” Anybody will do—even the “‘ittle girl in rags.” Those who have experienced that premature clouding of life’s golden morning—a solitary childhood—may remember the wistful longing with which they have stood watching groups of dirty, happy little rogues, collected at street-corners and on village-greens, and how sorely they have rebelled at the prohibitions which made it impossible to join them. Easy age! when there is no patrician exclusiveness, and little of the eclecticism of personal tastes or affections: when the chief thing wanted in society—companionship.

But as if in compensation for this, the tie, so slight then, becomes afterwards so tightly riveted that there are few pleasures purer or more exquisite than that taken by old playmates, or children of one family, in talking over every trivial thing belonging to their contemporary childhood. And the same tacit free-masonry which makes most people hear patiently any sort of love-story, makes everybody listen with a vague interest to the chronicle of everybody else's childhood; for both themes form two out of the three universal facts of human life—birth, love, and death.

Therefore it may amuse some, if, prior to saying a few serious words on the subject of play, I gossip a little as we did the other night over our fire—I and the only one now left to gossip together over our childhood. We did so, apropos of the notion already started, that childhood is the only time when it was necessary business—this going out to play.

We were not city children, thank goodness! We never had to be muffled as to the bodies, denuded as to the legs, our heads weighed down by beautiful hats and feathers, our feet compressed into the nastiest of boots, and sent out walking, solemnly and genteelly, through streets and squares. I am proud to say ours was a very different costume. It consisted of a pinafore of common blue print, made after the pattern of a French blouse, put on over all our other clothes, fastened at the waist by a leather

belt, and reaching nearly to the ankles; which, in boys and girls alike, were defended by stout shoes, merino stockings, and those substantial under-vestments which we were then not ashamed to call "trousers." Some light head-gear, cloth cap or straw hat, was the only addition necessary to the universal all-covering blue pinafore.

O sacred blue pinafore!—so warm, light, and comfortable—put off or on in a minute—allowing full liberty to run, jump, climb, scramble, or crawl, creating a sublime indifference to dirt or tears—that is, fractures—I have never seen any modern garment appropriated to children's wear which could at all be compared with this costume of my youth.

In it attired we went out to play. Our play-place was the garden, the green, and the great field before the terrace where we lived: there was a tabooed region beyond, consisting of the parade and the public walks, where we were not allowed to go in our blue pinnafores; but within the above limits nobody and nothing interfered with us. On the green, ball-practice—not bullets—against a gable-end, tip-cat, trap-bat, prisoners' base, cricket, marbles, were carried on; likewise digging of holes and making of bonfires. The garden had its restrictions, especially at the season of growing vegetables, though I remember a rhubarb-bed which mysteriously withered in consequence of a secret excavation being made *under it*; and an ash-tree, which being built into the

chimney of a hut—where there was a fire and a good deal of gun-powder used—was by next spring sensibly affected in its robustness of constitution, indeed I believe it ever afterwards declined to put out a single leaf.

But these things were trifles; so also were a few prohibitions concerning the field, when it happened to be knee-deep in mud or snow, or filled with three hundred head of cattle which periodically visited it; for the poor burgesses of that place have enjoyed from time immemorial the right of successive pasturage in the three or four—I forget how many—large town-fields.

When they came to ours what a jubilee it was! To be wakened by a distant murmur of lowing, neighing, shouting, trampling—to dart to the window and see with sleepy eyes in the gray dawn, our field covered, not with daisies and buttercups—these floral delights must be sacrificed forthwith—but with a moving multitude—equine, bovine, asinine; and gradually with countless milk-maids and milking-men, carrying their pails or sitting peacefully leaning against well-behaved cows.

After then, no want of a place to play in. We used to get dressed by six A. M., leap the ditch-bank, mug in hand, to have it filled direct from the cow. Not any cow, but our own particular animal; for we chose favourites, whose proceedings we watched and to whom we gave names—Daisy, Brownie,

Cowslip, and the like—and over whom we were exceedingly jealous. Woe be to the individual who presumed to go for a pennyworth of milk to anybody else's cow! Or still worse, who dared insult any but his or her own lawful cows with what we were particularly fond of doing—namely, stirring them up and squatting down on the circle of warmed and perfumy grass where they had been lying all night.

The other animals we patronised little, though occasionally it was fun to run after an infant donkey, or come stealthily behind some drowsy old mare, and twitch a hair or two, invaluable for fishing purposes, out of her long tail. Strange to say I do not remember our ever coming to harm, though with the mixed cautiousness and fearlessness of country-bred children, we used to roam among these beasts all day over as long as they stayed. And we were inconsolable—for at least an hour—when, starting up as usual to give a morning glance at our favourites, we would find the well-cropped field all brown, bare, and desolate—the cattle were gone!

Once, and only once, the great field was made into hay. The novelty of the thing—the beauty of acres upon acres of waving, flowery grass, the exquisite perfume when it was down, and the excitement during the whole of hay-time—lasting a good while, for I remember one end of the field was green again before the other was mown—makes that summer one of the most vivid points in our juvenile

history. Its daily joys, being holiday joys, were only bounded by the terrible necessity of having to go to bed.

Even now a recollective pang affects me, as I think how dreadful it was to be "fetched in" on those lovely summer nights; how we envied those "poor" children on the green, who—probably having no particular bed to go to—were never sent to bed at all; how intolerable was the tyranny of being carried off up-stairs, undressed in broad daylight, and expected to go to sleep!—which expectation (I must confess) was generally fulfilled in five minutes. Nevertheless, we rebelled against the principle of the proceeding, and kept up for years a fondly cherished dream of contriving to play out of doors all night long, and never go to bed at all.

And once with this intent we laid a well-arranged plot—which, for the moral safety of any young reader, I beg to state, proves that like most children we were extremely naughty at times.

We thought if we could only lie quiet and keep broad awake till all the household were asleep, we might steal down-stairs, grope through the kitchen, unbolt the back-door—and so away! Out to play—when there was nobody about but ourselves; out under the stars, or obeying that summons—which to my mind still conjures up a dream of unattained bliss, which haunted at least a dozen years of my childhood—

STUDIES FROM LIFE.

"The moon doth shine as bright as day;  
Boys and girls, come out to play:  
Come with a rattle, and come with a call;  
Come with a good will, or come not at all!"

For the furtherance of this plan we determined to go to bed in our clothes. How we managed it I now forget—whether we generously came in without being "fetched," and volunteered to put ourselves to bed, or tried some other *ruse* calculated to throw dust into eyes that were aching with many cares never understood till little boys and girls grow up to be fathers and mothers;—but we certainly did manage it. To prevent discovery we put on, outside all our day clothes, our innocent-looking night-gowns, and lay down to sleep as quiet as mice, and as good as gold.

But fate was against us, as against most conspirators. Maternal surveillance—missing the aforesaid clothes, including the boys' boots, which were safe on their feet, also a little surprised at our all appearing so very fat in bed,—proceeded to investigate. Alas! we were ignominiously discovered and made to undress and go to bed properly like good children. And though since then we have each and all of us kept many a night watch, sleeping roofless under foreign stars, or seeing the English dawn break mournfully from sick-room windows, never, never have we been among the number of those fortunate little boys and girls who can

ut to play when the moon did "shine as bright  
s day."

But once, on a birthday, we obtained perm<sup>i</sup> n  
rise early enough to go out and play by st<sup>r</sup>  
Well do I remember the look of that ch<sup>ild</sup>  
ember morning, the brightness of the star<sup>s</sup>  
ense blackness of the trees, the solit<sup>e</sup> ne  
rrace and the road; how hard we tried to p<sup>re</sup> ade  
rselves that it was very pleasant and that we en-  
yed everything very much. Our chief proceeding,  
defiance of numb fingers and tingling toes, was  
gather laurel in order to make a crown for the  
ero of the day—who, protesting it was "cold" and  
spidery," declined putting it on his head, and  
uggested placing it on the top of the pump. There  
r weeks we watched it dangle; watched it dole-  
lly from behind nursery windows, where, shut up  
ith hooping-cough, we spent the rest of the winter.  
ut still protesting—as even yet we protest—(all  
ive one, whose birthday now passes by, outwardly  
ekept, and whose fair-haired head has long since  
een laid down in peace, without any laurel-crown)  
—that we would not on any account have missed  
at "going out to play" under the November stars.

Our play was sometimes exceedingly hard work.  
laugh now to call to mind the extraordinary de-  
ght there used to be in digging a hole; not for  
ny purpose or after any design, but simply digging  
hole. We would be at it for entire days, with a

perseverance worthy of Cornish miners or Australian gold-hunters. If our labour had any aim at it was that of digging till we came to water, which not unfrequently happened, and then our hole came a pond. Once, after hearing of the conflagration, we started the idea of digging down in spite of it, and burrowed several feet deep; when, finding the earth no warmer, we gave up our project. We never made any particular use of our holes except to sit in them occasionally, enthroned on brick and pieces of stone from the neighbouring quay, exceedingly proud and happy, though slightly cold and uncomfortable.

But towards the 5th of November, the epoch in our year, we ceased to dig and began to build. Our architecture was at first very simple, consisting merely of a few bricks, so placed as to keep off the wind from our bonfire. From these we planned seats round it, where we might watch the potatoes roast and light our crackers at ease. After reading Cooper's novels, and George Craik's *New Zealanders*, a book which was long our prime delight, we conceived the bold idea of building a sort of wigwam. Several were attempted and failed; the last, which lingers in most vivid recollection, is that one, before mentioned, of which the chimney was formed by the ill-fated mountaineer.

Aladdin's palace was nothing to this wondrous architecture. Its site was in a triangular com-

where two walls joined; its other walls were built of quarry-stones and earth. Its roof had proper beams; old pea-sticks, or as we called them, "pea-rice;" and was slated over with thin stones. There was a chimney, with two seats in the chimney corner, quite proper and domestic, save that in these seats or any other you never could get further than eighteen inches from the fire; and that the smoke obstinately persisted in going out anywhere except by the chimney.

Nevertheless it was a magnificent house, impervious to wind and rain, except on very bad days. In it we spent our holiday afternoons, for many weeks—being obliged to rush out at intervals to clear our eyes, mouths, and noses from the smoke, and to cool ourselves after being nearly as well roasted as our own potatoes: still, I repeat, it was a magnificent dwelling. It finally, like all earthly mansions, fell into decay; the last thing I remember of it being that one of our boys, executing a horn-pipe on the roof, in order to dance it down, saw to his horror, emerging from the procumbent ruins, a school-fellow, who had been sitting by the hearth, and now shook himself composedly, put on his cap and walked away—perfectly safe and sound. Truly, children, like cats, have nine lives.

These were winter pleasures. In those days, what a grand event was the first frost, which I have known come as early as the 9th of November—

“mayor-choosing-day,” or “clouting-out”—which, by an old town-custom, was the *vernalia* of play. All the children in every *sc* private house were “clouted out” by a *b* young revolutionists, armed with “clouts”—ropes—with which they battered at school till the delighted prisoners were set free. *h* to the master or mistress who refused the *b* for there would not have been a whole pane the school-room windows; and I doubt if *e* worship, the new mayor, would have dared to the face of public opinion by punishing any “*out.*”

Our next era was “when the canal bore.” It meant, when that famous piece of water, our *T* our Rhine, our Loch Lomond, our Lake *S*, was hard enough for skating; when we could walk on foot across those depths, sacred to sailing and fishing; and kick our heels against clumps of frozen water-grass, which had w many a bold ship (constructed out of a bit deal, and three long brimstone matches—it fore the age of lucifers), and harboured a gudgeon, swimming away with our unfortunate in his mouth—sorely lamented by us, but fear, on account of the gudgeon.

Well knew we every inch along the canal—up to the big stones, where the skaters sit tying on their skates, and the timid loo

stand watching the two beautiful slides that were always made right across the canal basin. We had never heard then of Webster, R. A.; but his famous "Slide" in the Art-Treasures Exhibition brought back to me, as it must have done to thousands more, those glorious frosts of old, when we were out at play from daylight till dusk, as merry as crickets and as warm as "toasts"—barring our noses, toes, and finger-ends; running in at noon for a scrap of dinner, which we gobbled up as fast as possible—bless us! we had the digestion of young ostriches—and were off again instanter. For who could tell? —it might be a thaw to-morrow.

In one thaw after a long frost, we—in the absence of lawful authority—performed a feat which under no other circumstances could have happened; and which, in its daring originality, still gives us a degree of naughty satisfaction. We discovered that the canal opposite a coal-wharf had been broken up by boats into large blocks of ice, which still went floating about. One of us, who had unluckily been presented with a volume of Arctic Voyages, embarked on the nearest of these icebergs, and went floating about—guiding his course by the aid of a long pole. Of course, there were soon half-a-dozen more imitating him. Oh! the delight of that sail—in its total ignoring of danger, its indifference to shipwreck, and cool enjoyment of submersion! One of the voyagers still tells with

pride that he "got in" up to the neck three times that afternoon—the only termination of which was his being obliged to go to bed, because the whole of his available wardrobe was hanging to dry by the kitchen-fire.

Nothing worse happened, much as it might have been deserved. And if that handful of foolhardy lads—one or two of whom, chancing to read this, may call to mind that very afternoon's play—could be gathered together now, out of India, China, Australia, from happy paternal English homes, and quiet graves, where the solitary name, left behind to neither wife nor child, moulders away upon the forgotten headstone—happy they if they could plead guilty to no freak more perilous, no delirium of pleasure more fatal, than the sailing on those ice-bergs across our old canal!

But reflecting on these facts of our childhood—though we were brought up with at least as much care as falls to the lot of middle-class children generally—recalling our daily risks of life and limb, and moral contamination—though this latter was small peril, as it is to all who have the safeguard of a good and innocent home; and yet remembering what a boundless enjoyment, what a vital necessity was to us this going out to play; we cannot but ponder deeply on the lot of those other children whom we used to envy for being allowed to play anywhere and anyhow, without being called in to the inter-

ruption of meals or the ignominy of bed. "Poor" children—as with genteel accentuation of the adjective, Dickens's *Miss Monfathers* terms them—we have come to think differently of them now. Not exactly for their poverty—hunger is sauce to any fare, short of no fare at all, and dirt makes a capital substitute for clothes. Except in the very depth of destitution, it is rarely the children who suffer most, at least consciously. Nevertheless, we view them with a full heart. We wonder how, in cities especially, they ever manage to arrive at maturity; or, so surviving, and blessed with their due share of limbs and bodily faculties, we marvel that they do not all turn out thieves, rogues, sluts—or worse.

Dangers infinite, all children must meet: it is an old saying, half true and half profane, that Providence guards the child and the drunkard; but in the former case Providence guards by strictly natural means—namely, the exceeding elasticity of frame, tenacity of life, and power of eradicating evil by perpetually renewed growth, which belongs to all young animals. There is no need to double the risks, as they are doubled and trebled to poor people's children—that class upon which society depends mainly for health, labour, and industry. Any person of common sense, during an hour's walk along the streets of London or any large town, will have sufficient evidence on this subject.

Now, it seems pretty well agreed upon by modern philanthropists, that if we are to mend the world at all, it must be through the new generation; for the old, alas! is almost hopeless of improvement. Besides, in the balance of advantages, it is wiser to expend labour over a young tree than on one which, toil as you will, you can seldom straighten out of the crookedness of years, or graft with pleasant fruit upon a stem which has long borne sour. Still, we are bound to "dig about it and dung it," as the good Master allows; but let us not for its sake neglect the growing trees which spring up around us on every side. There is more hope in Ragged, Industrial, National, or even Infant Schools—in teaching establishments of every sort and kind, religious or secular—than in all our prisons, workhouses, reformatories, and penitentiaries.

The great want in this admirable movement for the benefit of the young, is its being almost exclusively on the mental improvement system. However varied be the instruction, and the mode in which it is imparted, the chorus of it is always "Teach—teach—teach."

Now, children do not need teaching every day, and all day long; any more than a tree requires perpetual watering, pruning, propping, and manuring. Set it in the ground, and let it grow. It will grow in spite of you; and the best and wisest thing you can do is to watch it that it grows straightly and

safely—defending it from all noxious influences; but leaving it in its early season of development to the dews, and sunshine, and fresh air, and meddling with it as little as possible.

As important as any learning, often more so, for education can be gained in very mature life—is to children that indispensable blessing, *play*: safe, well-watched, and properly restricted, but freely allowed and daily play. Not doled out in ten-minute portions between hours of lessons; or according to *Miss Monflathers*' creed for "poor" children—

In work, work, work. In work alway  
Let their first years be passed—

but granted as an indispensable and very large item in their sum of existence. Poor little souls—why not? Childhood lasts but a dozen years or so at best. As says Christopher Sly:

Let the world wag, we shall ne'er be younger.

Perhaps even well-to-do parents scarcely think enough of this great necessity of play for their little ones, boys and girls both, up to as long a period as possible; which will be short enough time with most—alas! well do I myself remember the last evening that ever I put on my blue pinafore and "went out to play." However of these respectable fathers and mothers I am not now speaking: but of

the fathers and mothers—not less tender and scrupulous, often—of working-people's children.

Schools are excellent things; yet when a child is turned out of school, to a home which probably consists of only a single room, or two rooms—which labour and sickness, drunkenness or want, make worse than no home at all—where does he go to? To play, of course; but where? In filthy alleys, making mud-pies—swimming boats along open sewers—busy at hop-scotch on pavements, or pitch-and-toss at street-corners; darting under horses' heads and carriage-wheels; exposed all day to the policeman's collaring, the errand-boy's "whopping;" and half the night to the foul-mouthed "rows" which take place at gin-palace doors; open, in short, to every sort and kind of bodily harm and mental corruption.

You, fond and gentle lady-mother, who send your children out for a walk, or into the safe garden, under the guardianship of two nursery-maids, on wet days have them for a game in the dining-room, and at eight o'clock every night go up to kiss them in their little beds—only fancy *your* boys and girls turned out for one single day of such a life as this!

Can anything be done to remedy it?—anything which, without detracting a jot from the usefulness of schools, will provide for a want which no schools can supply?

A society, lately started, has tried to answer this

question. It is called "The Playground Society," and its object is "to provide playgrounds for poor children in populous places." Its originator, a benevolent London clergyman, thus states how the scheme arose—the paragraph is taken from a private letter, which, for public good, there can be no objection to make public:

"The immediate impulse to our Society came from a little street in my late district, wherein I found a woman 'blowing up' some little boys well for making a noise before her house. I entered into a conversation with her upon my wish to have a playground set apart for poor children who had no room to play at home, and must play somewhere. She replied 'that the idea was a good one, because then they would not trouble *her*.' Feeling therefore that all classes were to benefit by the movement, I began to look up friends to the cause, and a good many were found. We hope to be more useful by assisting in the conveyance of sites than by their purchase. We do not propose to do more than procure the playground, leaving the management to local authorities."

Therefore, the brief prospectus urges "support from the nobility and gentry, with reference to the towns and cities contiguous to their estates;" and earnestly invites such to make "grants of land, which can be legally conveyed for that purpose." We feel that we are perhaps affording one chance

more to a substantial public good in giving the address of this Society—"17 Bull and Mouth Street, St. Martin's-le-Grand, London."\*

Thus, with a plea for playgrounds and for play, we end these reminiscences of our play-days—now gone by for evermore. Yet blessed are those families, however dwindled and separated; who are bound together in heart by remembrances such as these! And blessed is the memory of those parents, just, patient, forbearing, and tender, who—however tried (how sorely none find out until taught by parenthood themselves)—have, in spite of all afflictions of their own, given to their offspring that blessing which nothing afterwards can take away, and the want of which nothing can ever supply—the recollection of a happy childhood.

\* It is scarcely needful to say that this was a magazine article written for a particular purpose. But the author, feeling strongly on the subject, prefers leaving it exactly as it stands.

### "WANT SOMETHING TO READ."

NEXT to "going out to play," there is nothing so important to many children, most children I may say, as having something to read. After a certain age, and the attainment of a certain amount of scholarship, almost every child begins to "read to itself"—possibly not omnivorously—sometimes to a very small extent. But a child who does not read at all, and does not like any sort of reading, is almost an anomaly now-a-days; at least, among what we proudly term "the educated classes."

It is curious to trace the rise, progress, and development of this branch of education, informal and unconscious, yet which, more than any others, influences the mind, character, and disposition of a growing-up child. I speak not of prodigies or precocious geniuses, but of ordinary boys and girls, just waking up to think about—not themselves—they rarely trouble their little heads with self-contemplation, and it is a very bad sign if they do—but the wonderful world they have come into; about which their chief sentiment is an insatiable curiosity.

No one can spend half a day in the company of a moderately intelligent child, if only arrived at the

age of "What's dat?" "What zu doin'?" without remarking how extraordinary a peculiarity of the infant mind is this same curiosity. Our grandmothers tried to repress it; and "Little people should not want to know everything"—"Little people should learn not to ask questions"—were acknowledged axioms of old-fashioned education; but we are wiser now. To the contemplative mind there is something solemn, almost awful, in this ardent desire to know, beginning with the six-months' old babe who stretches uncertain fingers to its mother's bright neck-ribbon, or screams because it is not allowed to catch hold of the flame of the candle.

I have often thought it might be useful if people would take the trouble to recall and jot down their own experiences of this craving after information—this unquenchable thirst to find out the why and because of things, which is only allayed by asking incessant questions, or by reading books. And, just as one experience out of many, which, by rousing thoughtful elders to reflect on their own youth, may help them to deal more wisely with that mysterious piece of God's handiwork, as yet unspoiled by man—a child—I shall here set down a few recollections about our reading and our books when we were children.

In those days, juvenile literature was very different from what it is now; there were no children's *publishers*, making it their speciality to furnish the

ravenous youthful maw with the best species of aliment, employing excellent authors to chronicle *Dr. Birch and his Young Friends*, *Grandmamma's Pockets*, and *Good-natured Bears*; and illustrating *Cinderella* and the *White Cat* with almost as good art as then adorned the walls of the Royal Academy. Even the cheap periodicals now littering about every house, and to be picked up by every child on every parlour table, had not then begun their career. No *Illustrated News*—no *Punch*—no *Household Words*—only a few antique magazines, or an accidental newspaper, chiefly provincial—for we were provincial children—reached our eager hands. And even this species of fugitive literature was very limited; for we were not rich, we had no large domestic library, nor did we live in a reading community. I only remember three houses where it was delicious to go to tea, because—you were sure of getting a book to read. But this is forestalling.

Does any one call to mind his or her first book? The very first time when, arriving a step above c, a, t, cat, and d, o, g, dog, some strange volume, not the spelling-book, was taken in hand and blundered over, sticking at all the hard words, which were either puzzled out or skipped altogether, as character and talents impelled. But once fairly embarked on this undertaking, what a wonderful thing it was! A book—something interesting—something which outstripped tame black and white pages could afford

us an enjoyment, intangible certainly, involving nothing to eat, or drink, or play with, yet an enjoyment exquisitely real, substantial, and satisfying, such as nothing had ever been before.

Of my first book I have the strongest impression still. It was *The Robins*—by Mrs. Trimmer, I fancy, but am not sure, never having beheld it since the age of six. It was lent me by a playmate of seven, and accompanied by the gift of a little black top. The top I cherished—whipped affectionately for years—and have it somewhere still, in memory of a warm heart that death only ever made cold. But the book I altogether slighted; until, casually opening it one day, I found, with some surprise, that I could read.

It was—for the edification of those who know it not—the summer's history of a pair of robin-redbreasts; taken from the robin side—in fact, what I may call the bird's-eye-view of the subject. It described all their domestic proceedings, from the building of the nest in the ivy wall to the successive appearance—equalling in importance the arrival of “our baby”—of four young birds, Robin, Dicky, Flapsy, and Pecksy. As I write down their names, how the idea of them comes back! each as strongly individualised as any featherless bipeds I ever knew. Robin, the eldest, a brave, generous, harum-scarum bird, who, determining not to be taught but to teach himself to fly, came to grief and a broken wing, was

unable to return to the nest, and had to subsist for the rest of the summer under a dock-leaf—a “shocking example”—fondly tended by his amiable sister Pecksy; Dicky and Flapsy—far less interesting characters—who were always allied in both mischief and pleasure, never did anything either naughty or good; and the two elderly birds, exceedingly moral and parental, who nevertheless, to my surprise, contentedly turned the young ones adrift, left the nest, and subsisted for the winter on the crumbs of the Family who owned the garden.

This Family—portrayed in the frontispiece, with enormously big faces, head *et præterea nihil*, looking in at the nest—were quite secondary characters in the story. The bird-life was all in all. Such a glorious sense it gave of the delight of living under ivy-leaves, and being fed with a worm on a bright summer morning; of learning to fly, and then wandering at ease from tree to tree, receiving occasional moral lessons about guns, traps, and the duty of not robbing overmuch the protecting Family. Memory may have exaggerated and put much in the book that was not there, but the general impression is ineffaceable. Even now when every morning I meet that graceful, gentlemanly old robin, who looks at me for a moment with his shy, bright eye, and then hops away under a gooseberry-bush—I often think: “My little friend, can you be any descendant of those familiar companions of mine, far back in

distant ages, who lived—in paper and printer's ink, common-sense would say, but to me it seems as if they had abode, and still abide, through a summer that never ends—in a real garden, in a real nest under an ivy wall."

*The Robins* must have been our very first era in literature. Our next was *Sinbad the Sailor*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and *Jack the Giant-killer*—not elegantly got up, but coarsely printed in paper covers, with "cuts" instead of "plates." Extraordinary cuts some of them were—as, seeing one of the same editions lately, I found out. Vividly it recalled all the rest: Crusoe seeing the footprints in the sand, Crusoe and his man Friday; Sinbad carried up by the roc, Sinbad put into the open coffin and let down into the funeral cave; also Jack, sitting genteelly at table with the ugliest of giants, who it was half-feared might "frighten" us; but, bless you! we were never frightened at anything of that sort. We had no nursemaid to tell us horrible tales of "Bogie" and the "Black Man"—all we ever heard or learned for the early years of our lives came direct from the fountain-head—the fountain of all tenderness, and safety, and loving-kindness; whose incessant guardianship made, in this, our poverty more blessed than if we had been heirs to

All the wealth that fills the breeze  
When Coromandel's ships return from Indian seas.

Which reminds me that in our earlier days we

thought very little of poetry. Nobody ever bothered us with Dr. Watts's Hymns, and the like—no crammed our poor little brains with cant words and phrases, of which the ideas were either totally incomprehensible, or received in a form so material as to be either ludicrous or profane. Accidentally, we lighted on "The Busy Bee," "Hush, my Babe, lie still, and slumber," took a fancy to them, and learned them by heart; also, many of the *Original Poems for Children*—which have been the delight of more than one generation. But we never meddled with religious poetry, nor were set to learn it as a task, any more than the Bible—the book of books—which we all read aloud reverently, verse by verse, elders and youngers alternately, every Sunday evening.

For our secular reading, out of lesson-time, we were obliged to depend on ourselves. The treat of being read to was quite impossible in our busy household. Therefore, possessing what is now called in grand phrase "a healthy animalism"—which I take to mean the ordinary sanitary state of most children who are neither physicked nor "coddled"—we gave the largest portion of our energies to play, and, with the exceptions mentioned, were rather indifferent to books. Gradually, however—on wet days and long winter evenings—we began to want something to read; something real; for we were wakening up to the conviction that rocs were not as

common as sparrows, and that the Lilliputian which some of us longed to find and be a most loving Glumdalclitch to, was not likely to be picked up in our field, or any field. In short, we wanted facts.

And here came in a book, which I have since suspected to be as fabulous as *Robinson Crusoe* itself, but which then we entirely credited—*Rolandi's Travels Round the World*. Its hero, with his companions—the naturalist, the man of science, and the doctor—who, I recollect, had a most unmedical propensity for eating—with all their adventures, were an inexhaustible delight. Earnestly we longed to penetrate to the interior of that marvellous Africa; the map of which—so often consulted by us prior to the days of lion-hunting Cummings, persevering brothers Lander, and modest brave Livingstones—was, except for the coast-line, a mere blank; a circumstance probably all the better for our not too veracious Rolandi.

Another book of adventure, which likewise I have never seen since, and which maturer wisdom is still loath to recognise as fiction, was Miss Porter's *Narrative of Sir Edward Seaward*. Strange that no enterprising modern publisher\* has ever disinterred and revived in a cheap edition this charming old book, with its *bon&fide* simplicity of detail, its

\* I have since heard that this has been done in Bohn's "Traveller's Library."

exquisite picture of the solitary island where Seaward and his Eliza are wrecked, and live *à la* Crusoe—and Mrs. Crusoe—during the first years of their married life; where they afterwards found a colony; then returning to England, bask in the favour of King George and Queen Caroline; finally becoming Sir Edward and Lady Seaward; though something less happy, as the reader feels, than the young pair cast away on that lovely, lonely Pacific island.

The Pacific seas gained another charm for us when somewhat about this era we lighted on G. L. Craik's *New Zealanders*. Every many-vowelled poly-syllabic name, every grim countenance therein, was familiar to us as the names and faces of our companions. Much we lamented that tattoo and paint, mats and war-clubs, were not the customary costume of youthful Britons; and to live in a hut, and squat round a baked pig, seemed to us preferable to any civilised notions about houses and dinners. As it was, the sole thing left to us was to practise drinking out of a calabash, holding the—not calabash, alas! but mug—high up, at arm's-length, in the approved New Zealand fashion. I should be sorry to confess how many times we soaked our pinnafores through and through, before this art was attained in perfection.

Captain Cook's Voyages, and his Geography, in two thick quartos, with maps and engravings innumerable, came in also, to confirm the mania for

all things pertaining to the southern seas, which lasted a long time, and may have influenced the family fortunes more than was then dreamed of. To this day, both to those of us who have seen it, and those who have not, there lingers a curious charm about that antipodean hemisphere, with its strange plants, strange animals, strange stars, strange skies: its mysterious half-known continents, and its solitary coral islands starting up from the depths of undiscovered seas.

This was our sole bit of romance. Compared with what I have since heard of other people's childhood, ours seems to have been the most matter-of-fact imaginable. We lived in a new manufacturing district, where was not a trace of legendary lore; and we must have been quite "old" children before we ever heard about ghosts or fairies. Also, our elders and superiors, though extremely well educated, happened to have a far stronger bias towards science, mathematics, and general solid knowledge, than towards art or the poetical side of literature. The first bit of real art I ever remember to have got hold of was Flaxman's *Homer*—beloved still as the key-note of what has been the pleasant music of a lifetime—but I am now writing of books, not pictures. It stirred me up to the study of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*: these two, with Thomson's *Seasons* and Young's *Night Thoughts*—after I had conquered a great dislike to the frontispiece, representing a gen-

tleman sitting at night in his study, and Death, a skeleton with scythe and hour-glass, coming to hold with him a little cheerful conversation—constitute the only poetry-books of which I have any distinct recollection.

Nobody else studied them: the family bent was all towards science. Many books of this era come to mind: *Endless Amusements*—which would have deserved its name with us, save for the unfortunate fact that the experiments therein were quite impracticable for want of capital—the *Boy's Own Book*, and the *Boy's Book of Science*. This latter was thumbed over from morning till night—as may be discovered if its relics be ever exhumed for the benefit of its owner's descendants—but I myself never got further than the illustrations, which were very pretty and artistic, and consisted of little fat nude boys busy over a blow-pipe, or an electrical machine, or a series of mysterious phials. I admired them much, but thought the little fellows looked rather cold, and wondered if it were always necessary to conduct scientific experiments without one's clothes.

At this period, we took to book-borrowing, in which our chief trouble was that benevolent friends would persist in lending us "childish" books. One of us, the little one, still recalls having *Sandford and Merton* thus foisted upon him, which he indignantly rejected; when, being told to go and choose what he

liked, he returned with Brande's *Chemistry*, M. Marcer's *Conversations*, Ure's *Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, or something else of the kind, which all he considered "interesting."

To this cause I attribute our indifference to M. Edgeworth, Mrs. Barbauld, and other excellent writers for children,—that we read them at too late an age when we wanted to know about men, women, and things in general. Thus, I remember luxuriating in Goldsmith's dry school-histories; having a personal friendship for Themistocles and Epaminondas, and a familiar acquaintance with all the old Romans; a passionate pity for Charles I., which made me drear over and over again, for years, of his taking refuge in our house, my putting him into the cupboard up the chimney, then dismissing him to safety with an infinitude of blessings, caresses, and tears. At such a romance as this, what to me were *Harry*, *Lucy*, *Rosamond*, and the *Parents' Assistant*?

To one writer of this class, now almost forgotten, I must make an exception. Few books in all life have ever done me so much good—the aim of all good books—as Mrs. Hofland's. Simple, natural, neither dragging the young mind down to its supposed level, which it has already got beyond, nor burdening it with dry morality, what is worse, religious cant, yet breathing throughout the true spirit both of religion and morality, stories for young people, such as the *Clergymen*,

*Widow, Blind Farmer, and Son of a Genius*, deserve to live as long as there are any young people to read them.

Writers for children are too apt to forget how uncommonly "sharp" is the little public with which they have to deal; how, whatever be its own voluntary make-believes, it is quick as lightning to detect and spurn any make-believe in grown-up people, especially when meant to take in its small self. Hypocritical goodness, or impossible self-denial, it rejects at once; as it does pictures of life where the moral is incessantly intruding, where the bad child is always naughty, and the good child never does anything wrong; where the parents are paragons of superlative wisdom and faultless perfection, and every action, good or bad, immediately meets its reward. Such tales are not of the least value, because they are not like life—a fact which no one is quicker to discover than a quick child—who feels that it is itself both naughty and good sometimes within the same half-hour; that its parents do not know everything, are occasionally unjust and cross; that it often does wrong unpunished, and does well unpraised. Therefore beware: give a child as much of fancy and imagination as ever you choose—in fairy tale, legend, and the like—which it will play with as it does with toys, and take no harm from; but, in Heaven's name, respect in it that instinct which comes direct from Heaven, and never in word

or writing, in teaching or in conduct, set before it as reality that which is not true.

About this stage in our juvenile history, a remarkable fact occurred. Our next-door neighbour began taking in a periodical—a large, small-printed folio sheet, with more “reading” in it than any newspaper, entitled *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*. How we used to rush in on Saturday afternoons to borrow it, and rush off again to some corner, where it could be read in quiet! How we hid it, and squabbled over it!—what tears it cost, what reproofs!—till at last, as the only chance of peace, the Journal was forbidden ever to enter the house. Consequently, we read it in the garden. I am afraid—I know—we were very naughty; but the thirst for reading was now becoming uncontrollable in all of us. I can recall, spite of the guilty conscience with which I handled this grand bone of contention, what exquisite delight there was in hiding it under my pinafore, or under a big stone, till I could devour it in secret; how, even yet, I can see clearly the shape, form, and type of some of the articles, such as the leader entitled “The Downdraught,” and the bit of poetry beginning,

Pretty Polly Partan, she was a damsel gay—

Little, how little thinking that I should ever be confessing this in the pages of the same Journal!

But all this while, in none of us had germinated,

in any shape, the romantic element. With me it first sprouted, I believe, not through anything I read, but through being read to, myself and my favourite companion, during one summer, and at intervals during several other summers and winters. Dim as a dream are those readings, chosen wisely by one who knew better than most people what children's tastes were, and especially that sort of tastes we two had. Fragments out of unknown books, Mary Howitt's poems and tales, Mrs. Austen's German translations, Shakspeare, Scott, Chaucer—old ballads and modern verses—a heterogeneous mixture, listened to on sunshiny mornings, with the rose-scent in the hedges, and the birds hopping about on the grass-plot; or on winter evenings, rocking in the American rocking-chair, in the snug little school-room, which neither we nor our children are ever likely to revisit more. Dim as a dream, I say, but sweet as anything in my whole childhood remains the grateful remembrance of these readings and the voice that read; which, to this day, when enjoying the ineffable luxury of sitting sewing and listening to a book, seems to me about the pleasantest voice of any woman's I ever heard.

The next epoch I have to chronicle was the grand turning-point of our childhood—the literary crisis of our lives. One fatal winter, we, whose doors sickness had rarely or never entered, caught successively measles, hooping-cough, and chicken-

pox, and never went out to play again till the spring. Then, shut up in a few small rooms, weary, sick and cross—not dangerously ill, but ill enough to be a burden to ourselves, and a plague to one another. What could we do to pass the heavy time away? What was to become of us?

I really do not know what would have become of us—so far as temper was concerned—had it not been for the interference of a benign provider in the shape of the bookseller of the town, who granted us free range of his circulating library. He lent him and to his “young man”—growing an adult man now,—who took the trouble of selecting books, changing them as often or letting us keep them as long as ever we liked; who was as patient and good-natured with us poor sick children as we had been the grandest paying subscribers. He hereby offers—should this book lie on his count as probably it will—our warmest gratitude. It may be a hint to other book-lenders, less mindful of the cravings of reading-children; and it is a relief to our minds thankfully to confess that much of what any of us has ever been, or may be, is owing to that “winter of our discontent,” which was made such a “glorious summer” by this unlimited supply of books.

What they consisted of, it is impossible to enumerate. I know they comprised fact and fiction, provender solid and light, classical and unclassified.

and that their quantity was enormous; that they set us fairly afloat on the great sea of literature, which, thenceforward, to us never had a bound.

Of course, individual tastes developed rapidly. Science, from a bias, became a steadily progressing knowledge; art, from a mere fancy, grew into a passion; and imaginative and romantic tendencies sprung up, full-grown, as it were, in a day. Our range of novel-reading soon comprised everything we could lay hands upon: Scott, Bulwer, Mrs. Opie, Miss Austen, and a writer whom we knew nothing about, but that he was almost as funny as his name, which was "Boz." I also remember our picking up the first number of a serial which we, already beginning to be critical, considered rather dull, and the characters decidedly unpleasant: it was entitled *Vanity Fair*. Of inferior romances, the amount of trash we consumed was something past reckoning; but, like all literary rubbish, it slipped out of our heads as fast as ever it was "shot" into them. We never took any harm from it that I am aware of.

And here I would fain say a word about our experience of what are termed "improper" books. We never had any, although we were allowed to read *ad libitum* everything that came in our way; for a very simple reason—the guardians of our morals put everything really hurtful quite *out* of our way. No tabooed volumes; no pages torn out, not—as I have heard of an excellent pater-familias doing—

marked in the margin, "Not to be read," which seems a good deal to expect from juvenile self-denial. Our elders never exacted from us anything they did not require from themselves: all literary provender wholly unfit for our youthful digestion, was either never known by us to be in the house, or—better still—was never brought into the house at all. The only instance of prohibition or hesitation that I ever remember was the *Vicar of Wakefield* which (why, I cannot to this day discover), probably from some advice of far less wise friends, was laid on the top shelf of the book-cupboard with, "Better not read it until you are a little older." I gazed at it longingly for some weeks, then climbed up, read the first twenty pages or so, standing perched on the back of a chair, and relinquished it, as being not at all "interesting."

Shakspeare even—that great difficulty of parents—was freely allowed; but no one took advantage of the permission except myself, and I did not care much for him, except for the purely imaginative plays, such as the *Tempest*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Winter's Tale*. I suppose I must have read him all through, for I cannot remember the time when I did not know Shakspeare—but I understood and appreciated him very little for a great many years. As for seeing any evil in him, I would as soon have thought of seeing it in the Bible, which, not to speak irreverently of the

Holy Word, contains a good deal that the fastidious delicacy of the present day might consider "not exactly proper for children."

Therefore, if individual experience may be allowed to say so, I do think that with children brought up in a virtuous, decorous home, where "to the pure, all things are pure," the best plan is to exclude entirely all glaring coarseness and immoralities, but especially immoralities, for the tone of a book has far more influence than its language; and *Don Juan* has done incalculably more harm than the grossest phraseology of Christian-hearted, moral, though rude-tongued Shakespeare. Afterwards, let the young creatures read everything, and take their chance. In that evil world which one sickens at their ever knowing, (and yet they must know it and fight through it, as their Maker ordains, or He would never have put them into it)—the best safeguard is, not total ignorance of vice, but the long habitual practice and love of virtue.

Into that world—across the enchanted ocean of which our pilot was the benevolent bookseller, who, I trust, under this anonymous guise, and through the oblivion of years, may yet recognise his own good deed—we children quickly passed. Therein, our readings, like our doings, concern nobody but ourselves, so that I will no longer continue the chronicle.

It will, however, have served some purpose, if,

in its literal facts, it carries any suggestions to either reading-children or their parents, during what may be called the *cacoëthes legendi*; when toys delight not, plays weary, playmates are quarrelled with, and the sole cry from morning till night is, "I want something to read."

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## WAR-SPARKLES.

It is one of the saddest things about war—about this our present war—bursting upon us suddenly, after a long season of peace,—that we gradually become used to it; at least we middle classes, whom it has not as yet touched so nearly as the upper and lower ranks. The first horror, the first triumph, having worn off, we return to daily life, which jogs on just the same; and “News from the Crimea” becomes a kind of indefinite diurnal interest, strong, indeed, but vague and unreal. We shudder, glow, or weep over it; but in a heroic, poetical, picturesque way, as it were a tale that is told; we find it hard to be received as a naked reality. In fact, the war altogether seems like a great fire—so far distant that we can hardly form an idea of the conflagration, unless by some faint smoke on the horizon, or a fragment of charred wood thrown for miles, startling us with a visible sign of how great is the unseen burning.

This fancy and these moralisings came into my mind the other day while pacing the Waterloo terminus. Therefore, jotting down a few observations

made that day, it appears not unfitting to call them by the above title—War-sparkles.

The great war-fire had been burning down dimly; Alma, Balaklava, Inkermann, began to be talked of calmly as historical names, not stammered over with a throbbing awe. Good Heaven! shall any of us now living ever forget that September day when we first read the *Times'* account of the battle of the Alma?—that September moonlight night, when in London streets, provincial towns, and in the deep silence of country villages, people gathered together and asked one another “the last news,” or speculated as to what sort of strange, new, impossible-to-be-realised scene the moon was illuminating on the heights of Alma?

But now all this excitement had subsided; people went about the streets on their own business, or rushed to and fro on railway lines. What a rushing there was on this very line, along which I was taking a short, luggageless journey, entailing no bustle, no trouble, and no good-byes—most favourable circumstances for making those studies from the life, of which a railway terminus is a first-rate academy. Being early, the platform is rather empty of humanities, so I amuse myself with looking at some luggage scattered about, and inventing imaginary owners for it. One rather anomalous heap particularly attracts me. I have even the curiosity to inquire what it is.

"Baggage for the Crimea," quoth the porter.

I start, remembering that this line is the direct highway to the East, and that probably every regiment despatched on foreign service, must have paced this platform where I am now pacing in such leisurely laziness, waiting for the train, with no one to part from, no one to leave behind. A certain discomfort seizes me; something like what I feel in reading with quiet, terrorless curiosity the lists of killed and wounded; something like what I felt this winter in walking through the streets and seeing every third person in mourning; bright warm colours seemed unnatural and unkind.

"Baggage for the Crimea," reiterates my friend the porter, shoving it along without a bit of sentiment.

It is an officer's trunk—his name is painted thereon in those glittering white letters which trunk-makers so greatly affect. And that large canvas-roll is probably his bedding. Poor fellow! many a heavy sleep he may have upon it; or it may bear him in months of weary languishing sickness; or upon it he may die. But that is taking a melancholy view of things, never the wisest view, under any circumstances.

And here come a set of fellows, who are evidently bent on anything but melancholy. One of them jostled me in the ticket-place, when I was meditatively smiling over the penetrative policeman's

remark: "Second class, ma'am, I 'spose?" Now tumble out on the platform by twos and threes, vain attempt at order, which is counteracted their jolly state of mind, and body too, to judge the half-topsy chat.

"There they go—one after the other, sheep," observes Porter No. 1 sarcastically to No. 2.

A suicide only too appropriate—as regards fate: since these are evidently recruits going to Southampton to be drilled into something capability, and then shipped off to supply the gencies of our army in the Crimea. Some of have a lowering, desperado look—the off-scouring respectability, which is always drafted into military defences;" and oftentimes, to the great surprise of Respectability, becomes not so bad a de after all. Others are mere lads—more fit to at soldiers on a village-green, than to be targets Cossack bullets. A few decent young men among them, but by far the greater portion to the awkward squad. Truly, if out of these bling clod-pates is to be evolved a section of British army—that glory of the world—one can but regard with mingled admiration and amazement the drill-sergeant.

But on they stumble—to the sound of own tuneless and muzzy "hurrah;" and the coming of a heterogeneous mass of indefinite

coverings, to each of which is appended the ominous bunch of ribbons that must have flaunted so cruelly in the eyes of mothers or sweethearts not many days since; for rarely is scapegrace so hopeless, or reprobate fallen so low, but that there is some woman to love, or at least to pity him. So even these half-drunken young boors acquire a certain interest in my eyes, thinking of the "old folk at home."

Well, they are all packed—penned, I may say—in some carriage not far-distant, to judge by the hammering of feet I hear, and the mingling of most sweet voices in that feebly uproarious cheer. But it dies out, and somebody starts a new idea—namely a song; the rest snatch it up, and bellow it out in the same disconnected fashion, every one ingeniously choosing his own time, tune, and words. Now and then I catch a note or two, and find the dreary noise is meant for an English version of "Auld lang syne."

"Jolly enough they are," observed occupant second of our carriage, a comfortable farmer—to occupant third, just leaping in. "Recruits, sure enough!"

"Um!" hums occupant third, with a slightly scornful air, either meant for the said recruits or the civilian opposite; for he himself undoubtedly is of the regular army—a well-trained, well-looking non-commissioned officer.

"Queer set of chaps, them," pursues the farmer,

evidently desiring, though with a vague awe, to be conversational and polite towards his military neighbour.

“Um!” repeats the soldier. “Took a lot of ‘em down to Southampton myself last week.” He speaks in the tone with which our agricultural friend might speak of a drove of his bullocks; and then drawing his cloak round him, relapses into dignified silence. Was *he* ever a raw recruit, I wonder?

But now the bell rings, and our train stirs a little; in a minute, we shall be off. I hear a sudden lull in the song—a total silence—and then a weak, very weak and uncertain “Hurrah!”

We are moving. It is probably, nay of a certainty, the last look that some of this train full of travellers will ever take of great old London, with its busy bright terminus, its murky, multitudinous labyrinth of streets, which we behold in an ever-varying panorama, moving below us as we fly on past Vauxhall.

I wonder whether any one of those fellows—who, their cheering having ceased, are tolerably quiet now—has put his head out of the window, and thought—as the dullest and wickedest young scamp must think at times—of some little pleasant fragment of the past? Has any one inly speculated in his rude way about the chance of “never coming back no more?”

Doubtless, no! For we all are apt to see only at our neighbour's shoulder the fate which stands invisibly behind our own; very few minds, and under very rare circumstances, are haunted by the strongly impressed dread which is, in fact, the unrecognised truth of all life;—that every minute is a “no more.”

“Have an orange, miss? Real nice! Do now.”

No, my benevolent farmer-neighbour; no, thank you. You were little aware on what a thread of fine-drawn sentiment and philosophy you were breaking—and as little aware, my honest friend, that your quiet fellow-passenger, whom you evidently took for some respectable person, probably a dress-maker, going to see her friends in the country, would ever put you down in an article. *You* are not particularly interesting; I have travelled with the like of you by dozens. I know your plump, well-outlined, apple-like profile perfectly—a thoroughly honest English profile—rosy and good-humoured in youth, gradually descending to the rubicund and jolly in old age. I have no doubt that your name is John Smith, or Thomas Brown, or some other thoroughly English name; that your antecedents, Smith or Brown, have been “grown” for generations at and about the country town whither you kindly ask if I am going? I conjecture you have unquestionably been for the last ten years the beau, par excellence, of all the shop-keeping beauty in the

said town, until you shocked its feelings by bringing home, from some rival town, or perhaps from London even, a Mrs. Smith or Mrs. Brown; after which you subsided into the sage proprieties of middle age. Yet you are conscious that you are a very good-looking fellow still—agreeable too—and that such a quiet person as myself cannot but feel honoured by your polite and benevolent attentions in the matter of the orange, and the query as to my destination. Certainly, my friend, you mean well, and I am naturally open to kindness. But, I repeat, you are not interesting. I have no great wish for your conversation; I prefer watching your opposite fellow-traveller, the soldier in the next compartment.

Is he conning over that great sad mystery—“no more?” Is he bound for the Crimea, I wonder? Has he any friends left behind in town, that he presses his moustached physiognomy so close to the window, and rubs the pane clear from mist, and gazes back, with a gaze very sad and serious for a handsome young red-coat, upon that huge, fog-overhung London, whose intersected lines of lights are becoming fainter, dwindling into lamps here and there, with black hazy patches between brick-fields, and commons, and hedged meadows, as we sweep on into the regular country.

That curiously earnest look interests me, even in a soldier. Some minutes after, he accepts from my

quondam friend the reversion of *Punch*, and removes close under the carriage-lamp to investigate it—quite in his line, for the sketch is that admirable one of the Crimean navvy digging Lord Raglan out of the mud, with the motto, "Spades are trumps!" —I take the favourable opportunity of investigating him.

Certainly there is a great deal of downright beauty sown broad-cast about the world. That head would make a first-rate study. Of the aquiline type, brown-skinned, dark-eyed, with a capacious brow and a well-cut mouth and chin—delicate, yet extremely characteristic, close and firm. The sort of head which convinces you that in whatever station its owner was born, his present one is a step or two above it, since he himself is the sort of man that is sure to rise. Now I understand the reason of the stripes on his sleeve, and his being intrusted to "take a lot o' them to Southampton." I have no doubt, young as he looks—certainly under thirty—that fellow could easily have commanded a regiment.

He smiles in a grave patronising way over *Punch*'s jocularities on his profession, and returns the paper.

"Sharp doings out there," remarks its owner.

"Rather!" with a twist of the moustache, indicating sublime indifference either to the subject or to the ignorant interlocutor.

“Going to the Crimea?”

“Our regiment’s ordered out in the spring.”

So my little fabric of sentiment falls to the ground; that thoughtful look was not a good-bye.

“Ever been on foreign service?”

“Eleven years.”

“Where?”

“Malta—Canada—West Indies—Calcutta.”

Our military friend runs over the names as carelessly as an omnibus-cad ejaculates: “Bank—Ox’d St—Totten’ Co’t-road.” The civilian draws back, and his next question is put with a certain wondering deference.

“Been long returned?”

“Nine weeks.”

And the young man, pulling his foraging-cap over his brow, throws himself back in his corner, with a plainly apparent air of “What-do-you know-about-these-sort-of things?” But the other meekly and reverentially persisting in his civilities, the soldier at last condescends to show that even a son of Mars is not insensible to the merits of oranges, and responds briefly to a few remarks on the war in the Crimea.

“Will it last, do you think?”

“Maybe; but most likely the best of it will be over by the time we get there.”

"How do you feel about going out?"—with slight hesitation, as if the worthy questioner had an uncomfortable consciousness of how *he* should feel under the circumstances.

"Me! Shouldn't mind if we were off to-morrow." And with a little snort—too entirely indifferent to be even contemptuous—he settles himself once more, shutting his eyes, and turning away from the lamplight, which sparkles merrily on his trim regimentals, and makes quite starry the metal ornament on his belt, the "bursting ball." As the head lies back, the face as quiet as that of a child in the cradle, I cannot help watching it, and speculating on the life of its owner—his wild wandering life "from Indus to the pole," also, what his coming home was like after those eleven years—whether he had any home to come to—any mother to trace in those set bronzed features, her lad who must have been a mere stripling when he went away? He was then a recruit, as raw, perhaps, as some of those in the carriage hard by.

Looking at the firm, handsome head, and truly gentleman-like bearing of this young man, who must have begun life in the ranks, I fell into a reverie concerning the influence of character on circumstances—circumstances on character—and where was the just division of results attributable to both. "A man's a man for a' that!"—undeniable fact. But, then, "Every man is as God made him." How far can he

himself; of his own freewill, remodel or degrade the original article? That problem, I suspect, never will be decided on this side of the grave: the great solution—as we hope—of all life's mysteries.

At present, it is sufficient to read, as I gladly do in the countenance of this man, only a step above the grade of a common soldier, confirmation of my favourite truth—that, granted certain conditions, which are denied to few,—a man's career lies apparently in his own hands, and he is—exactly what he chooses to make himself.

A pause at a station, and our sergeant—I believe that is his rank, though I cannot vouch for it, being quite unlearned in military lore—opens his eyes. He has not been asleep; for I have noticed him do the same several times, and look with a lazy yet earnest stare up to the carriage-roof. Query, where were his thoughts roaming? to Malta, or Canada, or Calcutta, or the West Indies? Sweeping over his eleven years abroad, or converging into that small point—the nine weeks he has been at home? Anyhow, he must have enough materials for meditation, Heaven knows! and I trust, judging by his air of goodness, steadfastness, and even woman-like sweetness when he smiles, that he need not be in any great dread of Heaven's knowing them all—or man either. Let us hope that, serious, even sad, as he was looking just now, within these nine weeks there has been an old mother's hand laid on brown

curls, inflicting on his heart no conscience-sting, no fear lest she should find out how much wickeder was the man who came home than her lad who went away.

“Aw—what carriage is this? I’ve lost my carriage—aw—”

And pushed in by the guard, for the train is moving, enters a stray from elsewhere, a very newly-fledged youngling—of the upper classes decidedly, as he takes care immediately to inform us.

“Aw—is this a second-class carriage? I never was in a second-class carriage before. Aw”—scanning with his eye-glass the two compartments, and turning up his nose at the bare seats, which *might* be newly painted certainly without ruining the company—“aw, deuced uncomfortable!”

He speaks with that drawl which, I have heard, is considered good in the “first circles,” at least in a segment of them; and manifests a good deal of indifference to the letter *r*. He is small, has a young face, weak in outline, is of light complexion, with light hair. He might pass for an Eton lad home for the holidays, only he wears a magnificent ring, and keeps perpetually stroking his upper lip, as if to assure himself that no accident has happened to the indefinite hirsute appendage there. Finally, discovering that he is locked in, and must perforce make acquaintance with a second-class carriage, he tries to settle himself, noisily enough—throwing his cloak

about, and talking very loud to us all in general. We are silent; but the soldier, under cover of his handsome moustache, indulges in an amused smile; and a little news-boy, who has crept into the carriage with his bundle, eyes with considerable respect the pompous boy-man opposite.

“Aw—got a *Times*, my lad? No! Must have a *Times*—very important that I should have the latest intelligence. Could I get a *Times* at ——?”

“Yes, sir.”

“What have you here? Aw—deuced provoking,” snatching, glancing over, and crumpling more than one paper, which, however, he returns without paying for. “I always prefer the *Times*. Any news from the East to-night?”—generally addressed to everybody.

“Can’t say—rather fancy not,” gruffly answers the sergeant, who sits directly opposite to him, and towards whom his eye travels.

“Oh, I see—what’s your regiment?”

A glance, indicating strongly “What business is that of yours?” then a monosyllabic reply.

“The —th; not a bad regiment neither. Going on foreign service?”

“No,” gruffer than ever.

“Of course not; I forgot. It’s the —th and the —th that are ordered to the Crimea. I’m off myself there to-morrow night.”

*This annihilating information was given with*

hands in pockets and chin in air, in an assumption of indifference.

The soldier answered with a military salute, and due military respect: "Indeed, sir."

"Yes," said the boy-officer, condescendingly leaning over to converse with the non-commissioned. "I received my orders yesterday. I'm going home for to-night, and to-morrow I sail. Quick work, as Lord C— said to me at the Horse Guards this morning. But the army must be supplied; the case is urgent, you know; we are very much wanted out there."

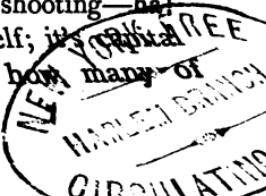
"Ay, sir," with a most creditable gravity.

"By the by," evidently desirous of a talk, to show how thoroughly "up" he was in professional matters, "how many do you think they are recruiting per day at the Horse Guards? One thousand! Incredible! As I said to Lord C—, when we were driving to-day to the army-agent's: the thing is impossible, and I don't believe it."

"Nor I, sir," with a quiet smile; "and I'm a recruiting-officer myself, stationed at —" (a town not far off).

"Curious! Yet I've never seen you about my father's place; but you may have seen me—doubtless you have seen me—for I've often gone about in recruiting-parties, with my gun on my shoulder, and my dogs, pretending to be out shooting—ha! ha! I like recruiting very much myself; it's capital fun. These poachers and the like, how many of

*Studies from Life.*



them do you beat up in a week? But a thousand a day! Aw, I assured Lord C——, from my own experience, that the thing was impossible."

"I think so too, sir."

A lull, in which the lad—what a mere lad he was!—held out a snuff-box graciously, "Take a pinch;" and began once more in loquacious excitement.

"Your regiment got the new clothing yet? Mine has not; we shan't get it till spring; very inconvenient. Now"—again leaning elbow on knee, in ardent and earnest consultation—"what *do* you think about cross-belts and waist-belts? As I said at the Horse Guards, I myself am all in favour of the cross-belt. It looks far the best."

"It does, sir; but then you see it has great disadvantages"—and the other began to explain a few facts on the part of the common soldier and his accoutrements, which I was not learned enough thoroughly to comprehend; but I could not help admiring the intelligent, respectful way in which he brought his practical information to bear on the voluble ignorance of his superior—the sound, sensible argument of "So I've heard, sir, from them that wears it;" the quiet patience of "You see, sir, it's us soldiers who know—these sort of things don't reach to head-quarters."

But "these sort of things" were almost wholly the letter of military etiquette; the cross-belt question

seemed of far more importance to the juvenile warrior than any other, with one momentous exception.

"There is a point, however, in which I quite agree with those at head-quarters, and am very glad it has been settled before I received my orders—the question of beards. They ought to be allowed—don't you think so? Shaving is such a monstrous inconvenience."

"Yes, sir," in a rather smothered, but still duly respectful voice, as the recruiting-officer put his hand over his own handsome mouth, so well garnished, and abstained from even a look which might hint how very little inconvenience any anti-barbal regulations would apparently have caused to the youth opposite. Not so the civilian beside me; who, at first impressed into attention by John Bull's instinctive respect for the first-class passengers of life, had afterwards, with John Bull's equally instinctive penetration of shams, listened, broadly grinning, and at this last speech broke out in a regular explosion.

Luckily, it was harmless. We had reached a station, and our youthful friend, once more eagerly impressing upon us that he had never been in a second-class carriage before, made a precipitate exit from ours.

"He—he—ho! I wonder how much a year it costs *him* in shaving-soap! Pretty fellow he is to

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fight the Russians! Is that the stuff your officers are made of, my friend?"

The recruiting-sergeant, who had been indulging in a few quiet smiles, now resumed an air of regimental dignity.

"Many a good officer has been made out of worse. He'll improve; he is but a lad."

"He seems merry enough at the prospect of going to get shot in the Crimea," I could not help observing. "It will be a rather different thing for his mother, if he has one, when he gets home to-night."

My friend the farmer looked rather surprised that his friend the supposed dress-maker should make any remark at all, but he ceased his loud laughter; possibly he himself had a little lad at home whom he would rather have beating a baby-drum, or see strut about petticoated, shouldering a sham-musket, than be sending off to-night to the Crimea. He listened very patiently while I gave him, woman-like, a piece of my mind—the other side of the subject, which touches nearest the women and mothers at home. For empty as the lad was, now he was gone, and his prattle had ceased, my mind involuntarily drew a vivid picture of the home waiting him to-night for the last night. His father's place, soon to be swept away from him, with all its luxuries—its dogs and horses, preserves and game-keepers—its hunting, fishing, and driving—perhaps, too,

the slight adjunct of "the old governor," who had paid scores of needless bills, "like a trump;" and of "mamma, who is always fidgeting after a fellow so!" All gone—this gay country-squire life, full of tangible sensuous enjoyments—the only life the lad had probably ever known, or wished to know—and in its stead, hardship, weariness, disease, and pain; death threatening on all sides—in the fight, in the camp, in the trenches, in the dreary desolation of the hospital; every possible form of human misery by which man's physical and moral strength is tried. And what strength can this poor lad bring to meet them?—Nothing!

"Ma'am," said my fellow-passenger seriously, apparently rather shaken in his dress-maker theory, and a good deal surprised that a woman unsusceptible to polite attentions should enter into any deeper subject, or, indeed, converse at all—"ma'am, these things are very true, and very unfortunate; but how can we mend 'em? Should you like to go out after the fashion of Miss Nightingale?"

"I think Miss Nightingale is likely to do more for our poor soldiers than all the Privy-council put together."

"But 'tis n't a woman's business."

"Anything is a woman's business which she feels herself impelled to do, and which, without losing her self-respect, she feels capable of doing."

"Do you feel yourself capable of doing like

Miss Nightingale? Would you like to be a nurse at Scutari?"

A second time I eluded this *argumentum ad feminam*. "There are probably very few women who would choose such a life, still fewer who are capable of fulfilling it; but when the two are combined, I see no reason on earth why any woman, high or low, should not undertake the duty, and be reverenced for doing it."

"Certainly, ma'am, certainly," pulling up his coat-collar, and composing himself to a snooze. I had wasted my warmth on too thick-skinned an animal. John Bull feels chiefly through his daily newspapers. My agrarian friend, within a dozen miles of a snug tea and Mrs. John Bull, had not a keen sensibility for either suffering or heroism.

For the recruiting-officer, who, in the next compartment, had probably caught our conversation very fragmentarily—he only now and then looked round on us civilians out of the corners of his eyes, in a kind of mildly superior air. "My good people, you are talking of things you know nothing at all about."

We do not! Heaven help us! That is and has been the great misery of this war, that we at home—at least two-thirds of us—do know nothing at all about it. We cannot take it in; and because we cannot, we are almost powerless against its miseries. What can I know—I, a comfortable English-

an, travelling thus in peace and pleasure? or jolly Englishman, going cosily home to smoke pipe over the fire, and tell your wife of this railway incident, adding, perhaps, as you'd but now (with a glance at my black gown, as ere to read the secret of my interest in Scutari), her bad for folk who have relations out there." Honest friend, what can either you or I know 'en those things that have reached us within the two hours? Can we follow those wretched boy-lots, who will have weeks on weeks of incessant and torment ere made into decent soldiers, and will be shipped off like cattle, to be hunted by Cossack lancers, or die in herds by the side, and in the trenches, and among the lean snows? Can we picture the future of that lad we laughed at, or guess how his mother ster, or some fond fool that cares for him, simple as he is, will sit at home these many months 'me, and picture it too? Can we tell what may be end of that fine handsome fellow who lounges site under the lamplight, who is ordered out spring, and who, with quiet brave indifference, didn't mind if it was to-morrow," is evidently at all risks, and under all circumstances, to is duty, and to call the highest heroism simple y," nothing more? Now, can you and I, my stay-at-home friend, imagine him lying in the with his stalwart limbs shot off, and his bold

brown face stark and white; or huddled under a flapping tent, with the snow beating in on his helplessness; or languishing weeks and months on an hospital-bed, and rising only—if he ever does rise—an invalid for life?

No, my good friend, we cannot realise these things; we can only, when needed, put our hand into our purse, as I daresay you would to the utmost of your honest capability, and try to abate any suffering we know of. Above all, to help on, each by his small power—making in the aggregate the power which rules the universe, Love—that time when the “nations shall not make war any more.”

So good-bye, my jolly agriculturist; may you give your ploughmen wages enough to keep body and soul together, so that they need not take to poaching first, and to the ale-house and “listing” afterwards. And good-bye, my steady recruiting-officer; would that, for your sake, our army were so nobly democratic, that every private had it in his own power to become a general: your good, handsome face will often stop me in future Philippics against soldiers.

Good-bye, for I descend at this little country station, and am ready to vanish into the dark; and ere the train glides off, like a long, sinuous black serpent, with three eyes in its tail, I hear the little *news-boy* running from carriage to carriage, with his

fan of papers extended, shouting out in his small voice:

“To-day’s *Herald*—second ‘dition! Last news o’ the war!”

The war—the war! And I am driving down peaceful country lanes, between feathery, white-foliaged trees, and deep silent snow-drifts, shone on by moonlight and stars!

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## AN OLD SOLDIER'S COMING HOME.

THEY are very quiet people, my Somersetshire cousins. Sight-seeing is altogether out of their element. Some of them never beheld London in all their lives, and have as much conception of it as they have of the Tower of Babel. Of a London crowd, they have no more notion than a Hindostanee has of the icebergs in the Northwest Passage. When I talked to them of the strangely solemn pageant—perhaps the strangest and solemnest that London streets will witness for many a century—the Wellington funeral, they listened with uncomprehending wonder, and thought “it must have been odd to see so many people together.” Of that multitudinous surging human sea—the grandest part of any metropolitan sight—they heard with the shrinking which most English country-gentlewomen feel at the idea of “the mob.”

Therefore, it was not surprising that when we heard of the “show” at Bristol, its funereal splendours were not attractive. We determined to be among the few who did *not* rush to see the *Caradoc* come into harbour, and the landing of that poor worn, *aged body*—which, perhaps, had better have been

left where the septuagenarian soldier's heart broke under his too heavy burden: where busy Slander, pointing out the countless graves around him, would have been silent as soon as her foot reached the old man's own. No: we had—or all avouched we had—not the slightest wish to see the poor general's sorrowful "coming home."

It was—as we in our isolated ignorance supposed—the morning *after* the funeral, when we walked to the station, with the intention of "doing" Bristol and Clifton in a quiet comfortable way, becoming such very quiet middle-aged gentlewomen, to whom the shortest railway-journey was an event of importance.

"Let me take the tickets, pray." For I had a notion that my little cousin, Miss Patience, would be completely annihilated by the crowd I saw gathering: or else that she would commit some egregious blunder in the matter of tickets, and allow us the pleasure of travelling to Bristol for a London fare. So I rushed valorously into the throng that seemed thickening momently behind me. Surely, surely—yes! too late we saw the fatal announcement, exhibited in black-edged formality on the office-wall, that, *this day*, trains would start to see the funeral of Lord Raglan.

We had made a great mistake; but the tickets were taken, and it required all one's powers, mental and physical, to edge a safe way out of that hot,

smothery, scrambling, shouting, fighting throng; to which one—only one!—helpless and miserable official was dispensing advice, entreaties, and tickets—the last in very small proportion to the two former. I owed mine solely to the burly protecting shoulder and bluff benevolent voice of a big Somersetshire lad: thence being piteously jostled and crushed, till I sheltered behind a sickly, grim, elderly Indian officer.

“Can’t you find your party—aw! Better ask the policeman: one always requires a policeman among the lower classes.”

“Yes,” added a lively young matron. “I’m sure I had no idea of the crowd till the policeman told me to take care of my little boy. I declare I had quite forgotten the child.”

An odd mother, I thought; but then she was so fashionable!

Here the crowd grew more nebulous; and at length I slowly emerged therefrom—to be met on the platform almost as eagerly and pathetically as Dante would have met a friendly ghost escaped out of purgatory.

“Of course, Cousin Patience, you’ll not think of going to-day?” said I.

But Miss Patience hesitated; and there was a curious twinkle in her brown eyes—such brilliant eyes! if only she would not hide them under that dreadful blue veil and green bonnet. There certainly

is in the human mind an inherent effervescence, which, however corked and sealed, when brought into contact with the wholesome natural air, has an irresistible tendency to froth over. And why not, Miss Patience? Who made your bright eyes, your merry laugh, and your gay heart, that instinctively responds to all innocent pleasures? Render tribute to whom tribute is due. Don't look so shamefaced and doubtful, as if you were afraid you were sinning much in gently hinting:

“We do not very often have a holiday.”

Upon which, though I firmly believed, from the signs of the gathering multitude, that these two amiable and simple gentlewomen would come home, as the children say, “all in little pieces;” of course I hesitated no longer. If we could but get safe into some carriage! and for the Bristol show, we must only trust to fortune.

Fortune favours the helpless as well as the brave. After a few well-escaped chances—such as my Cousin Patience’s being thrust next to a sweep and his bag, and my Cousin Faith’s being invited to the knee of an ancient farmer—we got secure, and, as we rejoiced to know, “thoroughly respectable” seats, near a grieved old lady, who, in the scramble, had paid double fare, and offered her return-ticket generously to the company round.

“Gie’un to I,” issued from the mouth of a large, handsome, well-dressed young fellow, who seemed to

have cultivated with the utmost success his farm, his flesh, his muscle, and his whiskers—everything, in short, except his education. But when his sweet-heart, blushing under a most wonderful pink bonnet, mildly ejaculated: "La, Joe!" and explained, in a smothered Devon accent, that the difference of fare might be applied for and be returned at Bristol, Mr. Joe with a wide-mouthed merry "Haw-haw!" relapsed into a conversation with a masculine neighbour on, I believe, turnips.

We started.

"Thirty-five minutes behind time," said a quiet young man, in the gray plaid costume of a gentleman-pedestrian or walking-tourist. "I hope no accident will happen to us."

Faith and Patience gave a little shudder, but still sat, worthy their names. On we sped till we lost sight of that fair white city, which, like a lazy beauty, not quite so young as she has been, drowses in sunny aristocratic calm in her nest at the valley foot, or climbs languidly, house by house, up the circle of the neighbouring hills. Very green the hills were—green as the slopes of Paradise; and now and then, through the meadows below, peared glimpses of the anything but "silver" Avon crawling on to its acme of muddiness in and Bristol.

"What a scene of confusion Bristol will be to day! I hope we shall come to no harm in

crowd;" and very painful suggestions of our position as "unprotected females" were forced upon our minds, as, through carriage-partitions, we listened to the loud talk of the holiday-people, to whom the poor old man's death had at least given one day of harmless festival.

"Sir," asked Miss Faith demurely, after a glance exchanged with Patience and me, and a second, very penetrating, at the young gentleman, her neighbour—"can you tell us how best to escape the procession to-day?"

"Escape the procession?" with a doubt if he had heard aright, and then a smile of considerable entertainment. "Yes, ma'am, I think you might escape all—all the amusements going, by taking back-streets, such as" —— He mentioned several.

"Thank you. I believe the procession was to start from Princes Street."

"Was it? Oh, thank *you*, madam. That will just suit me;" and, apparently mirthfully conscious that some people were not quite so foolish as some other people, he leant back, and pulled his brown hat over his laughing eyes. Patience's own again danced unlawfully.

"Don't you think, sister—not that I particularly wish it—but if, without crowding or inconvenience, we could see, just a very little? 'Tis quite a national sight—one we might like to remember afterwards,"

"Perhaps!" said Faith hesitatingly. "At all events, we needn't exactly go out of our way to avoid the show. As for the crowd, for my part"—

Evidently the case was settled. I, who knew what a crowd was, only hoped I might have the consolation of bringing my innocent cousins home alive.

The train threw us out, amidst its hundreds, and I found myself trotting after my companions down the queer streets of Bristol.

I take a great delight in the first plunge into any strange place, especially any strange town. It is a sensation peculiar of its kind, exquisitely vivid and agreeable—one which, in its individual charm, involuntarily seems a foretaste of that state of being which we believe we shall attain to when to the astonished spirit "all things" will "become new." The first sight of a strange region always remains to my mental eye a real picture, perfect in itself, distinct from any succession of after-pictures which familiarity may create out of it. It would be a curious psychological process accurately to trace and note the gradual changes which a series of impressions invariably produce, in a place or person, until the first impression is altogether obliterated, or remains, as I say, like a picture only.

Therefore I shall always see Bristol as I saw it *on that gray July day*, when every shop was shut

up in Sunday quietness, and the occasional toll of a muffled bell gave a Sunday-like atmosphere. Only it was no church-going groups that rolled along in such jaunty mirth, intersecting the foot-path in long lines, generally linked together arm in arm; sometimes a country youth, with a Blouselinda, in her very best shawl and bonnet, on either side; sometimes a labourer, his wife, and a string of small children. A great number seemed to have come in carts. I saw one evidently bivouacked for the day—the mother sitting on the front-seat, knife in hand, and on her lap a gigantic loaf, from which she was cutting such “lommocks” of bread, that one ceased to wonder at the very jolly appearance of these specimens of West-of-England rurality. As for their speech—and it was tolerably loud and plentiful—I found it quite unintelligible. I would as soon attempt to understand, or be understood, in a parley with the ghosts of our Saxon ancestors, as with their agricultural descendants of Wilts, Devon, and Somerset.

Some peculiarities were noticeable in these provincial sight-seers, as distinguished from a London crowd. There was a far slenderer sprinkling of what we are used to call the “middle classes”—nothing was abroad on foot but honest downright labour, bent on gratifying its curiosity in a solemn, resolute, English way. Very few jokes were scattered about—your *Hodge and Dolly* are rarely quick-witted—

at least not till the ale goes round; but everywhere was a grave circumfluence of buzzing expectation, which gave the effect of absolute silence. No scrambling or fighting for the best points of view, even if Hodge were sharp enough to discover them: he seemed too much unused to his position to grow obstreperous, and contented himself with wandering along by Dolly's side, or planting himself at intervals to stare about him, with an open-mouthed, quiet stupidity which served him and his neighbours in the stead of a dozen policemen.

As for that invariable and most obnoxious element in a London mob—lazy, lounging pseudo-gentility, sinking through various phases down to tattered, sharp-witted, shameless vice—it was here wholly absent. So likewise was the *gamin* race, with all its riot, mischief, and drollery. I never heard a single attempt at that small, impertinent, yet often exceedingly pertinent humour, which is the delight of a Cockney crowd, and the very stock in trade of a Cockney boy. And for pickpockets and the like, why, we might have safely walked, purse in hand, along the whole thronged line of road which faced the quay. Nevertheless with all its lack of sharpness, such intent, determined sight-seeing I never beheld as in this honest West-of-England mob.

We had passed St. Mary Redclyffe—that grand old church—staying scarcely a minute to admire *what is* perhaps the finest exterior ornamentation of

any parish-church in England. And all along our route we were followed by the muffled clang of its deep musical bell, that sounded, among the weak tollings of the other churches, like some rich ear-satisfying contralto among a dozen feeble, soulless sopranos. Shortly entering a higher road, where a crowd, a good number deep, lined the railings on the further side, we came out upon a broad arch of sky, with a landscape, half-country half-town, in the distance, and close underneath what must be the Avon, for masts and shipping were visible, at least the tops of them. On the opposite side of the gorge, which, we concluded, held the river in its depth, was a tall warehouse and a quay, and thereon a black reception-tent, decked with undertakers' plumes.

Ay, if we could see anything, it would be here. "Let us go to the bridge—I used to know the bridge-keeper," said my Cousin Patience.

And delighted at the idea of even one problematical friend in our crowded desolation, we threaded our way on, eager to attack the bridge-keeper.

Alas! he was gone, and another reigned in his stead—a bridge-keeper who knew not Patience!

"Can't pass, ladies; bridge closed for the next three hours."

Patience—who with humble folk has the most winning way I ever knew—"put the *comether*"

of her eyes and smile remorselessly on him, but in vain.

“Can’t let you in, miss; ‘twould be as much as my head was worth.”

“But, my man, where can we go?”

“Really, I don’t know, miss, or I’d say. Where them folk stand is the best, but they be standing ever since the bridge was open. The wharf, now”—

“Ay, the ship-building wharf—a capital place, if we could only get admission.”

“Ladies”—and a decent young woman, with a child in her arms, came curtseying up—“us do let ‘un through our cottage on to th’ wharf for a penny. Won ye come?”

“A penny! It’s the cheapest sight-seeing that ever I knew or heard of,” said I, as we followed our new friend into a shipwright’s yard, directly opposite “the show.” There, armed with three chairs, and just glancing round and discovering that we formed part of a decent gathering of working-people, we settled contentedly under shelter of a great lilac-tree that stretched out of the cottage-garden.

A curiously quiet spot, even though all around were small congregations of labourers and their families, of every age—the babies held up in arms, the elders seated or standing. One old, old woman was propped on chairs, and sat there, half-stupefied, as if she had not felt the out-of-door air for years; *sometimes* looking about her, nodding her head, and

smiling foolishly. Now and then arose an outcry of mothers, whose brats, with the usual duck-like propensity, would insist on waddling down to where the water kindly shallowed to the edge of the wharf, whence, doubtless, many a good ship had been launched. Otherwise, the place was wonderfully still—no crowding, no pushing. We just sat at our ease, and contemplated the scene, which was divided from us by what Bristolians politely, but somewhat imaginatively, call “the river.” In the foreground, a slow, leaden-coloured stream, rather canal-like and narrow. On it, close inshore, lay a beautiful yacht, the owners lounging about in the various picturesque costumes and attitudes that gentlemen-sailors indulge in. Opposite, near the landing-quay, was a large, gaily-dressed ship, the *Morning Star*, her decks thronged with ladies. The quay itself was sprinkled with moving groups, various in colour—black, white, and red. Beyond, in a square rampart, was a mass entirely red—the motionless lines of horse-guards; and beyond that again, the long vista of Princes Street, down each side of which were windows, balconies, platforms, alive with heads; while above them, innumerable flags made two waving lines of bright colour, vanishing into dim perspective. On the left hand, the river wore the same gaudy, festival air, for every ship was dressed all over with colours, half-mast high; and in many parts long “strings” of flags were suspended from some mast to some wharf—

window on shore. It might have been a triumph or a festival, but for the extraordinary quietness of the multitude, and the strange effect of the incessant minute-guns and tolling of the church-bells.

"How thick they stand on Brandon Hill!" said Faith; and truly the people there were clustering like a living wall. Above, the white houses of Clifton came out sharply against the clear sky; while gradually sloping downwards, habitations thickened and thickened, till it became the good old smoky city of Bristol, between which, right and left, the grimy Avon flows.

Hark! a louder gun, and a stirring among the black gowns, and white liveries, and red uniforms scattered over the quay. They conglomerate in a formal cluster. The black, white, and gray crowd on the decks of the *Morning Star* becomes extra lively, then steadies into expectation. Somehow, from this and from some vague murmurs about us, we learn that "she's coming."—Only the ship with its lifeless freight. Poor old man! England cannot say that "*he* is coming!" No bursting of cheers—no striking up of the known English tune, welcome to many a "Conquering Hero." There is a silent pressing forward of the crowd on shore, and the young owner of the yacht along-side mounts the poop for a better view, looks down the river a minute or two, then takes off his cap, and stands with his black curls bared—motionless. For, gliding

up the centre of the river, her busy paddle-wheels turning slowly, slowly, in a strange, funereal motion, that suited well her black hull and black masts, comes the little steamer *Star*, which brought from the *Caradoc*, and is about to land on his native shore the—*the body*.

Nothing but that! Nothing left, after Alma, Balaklava, Inkerman—after the summer's marches and the winter's siege—after months and months of hardship, danger, and anxiety, chronicled by those honest, simple, soldier-like despatches, which England used to read, week after week, with a true English pride in “our general”—nothing but *that* which you see under a small black canopy on the after-deck; ranged round which, in a ring of scarlet, the mourners stand.

She steams slowly up, the little vessel that looks so like a bier; on either side of her follow two long, long lines of boats, the rowers all in white shirt-sleeves, black neckcloths, and a black band round the left arm, dropping regular noiseless oars. Now she comes nearer—you can distinctly trace on the deck a black outline—of the shape familiar enough to us all. Her steam still slackens—the boats slip out of the line of procession, and gather round her. The moving groups collect in a mass on the edge of the quay; you may see the clergymen's fluttering surplices, the corporation's gaudy gowns, and the gray or bald head of more than one old soldier, standing

perfectly still. Gradually every head is uncovered; the oars are simultaneously lifted—a rising forest—and held aloft in salutation. But all is silence, except the occasional toll from St. Mary Redclyffe Tower, the boom of a minute-gun, and the faint splash of the steamer's paddles. Now they stop—she is close inshore; those waiting for her go at once on deck.

Ay, the old soldier has come home.

That return home, of a hero unvictorious, a commander not unblamed—a general who died worn out after a great error and check—history will remember as one of her saddest and most touching chronicles. Where were all the honest fault-findings, and the malicious slanders, which he bore alike in such mute courage—where were they now?

An old man  
Is come to lay his weary bones among you:  
Give him a little earth, for charity.

As the body was landed, one clear, prolonged melancholy bugle-note came from over the water, piercing, almost like the cry of a woman. Then a nodding of undertakers' plumes, and a moving of black velvet housings, as passed slowly along the quay the last carriage, in which we all shall safely ride. It was no funeral-car—a simple hearse, with a few mourning coaches following. The troop of horse-guards closed in behind, and then up the thronged, hushed, gaudy avenue of Princes Street the proces-

sion went—melting away into a dim mass, out of which came, at intervals, in shrill fife-tones, the monotonous, continually repeated notes of the Dead March in Saul: the saddest and yet sweetest funeral tune that ever was written.

And so they carried the old soldier home, and gathered him to his fathers.

“Patience,” said I, when, after a pause, so long that our neighbour sight-seers began to move away, and the yard was becoming cleared, we still stood on our three chairs, gazing over the river in the direction of Princes Street—“well, Patience?”

She had pulled down the blue veil, and Faith was busy hiding away her pocket-handkerchief. We walked silently along the river-side towards Clifton.

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## POOR PEOPLE'S CHILDREN.

SHE stopped to coax out of the gutter a small dirty urchin, struggling along with a still smaller and dirtier urchin in its arms. She certainly has the kindest and motherliest heart in the world, this matron-friend of mine. "Oh," she said, as we traversed the muggy and muddy London street, pausing often, for she was attracted by every form of infantile tribulation—"oh, what a life they lead, poor people's children! If we could only carry out the plan I was talking of, and set up in every parish of every large town a public nursery."

Now the question of public nurseries happened to be the one uppermost in her benevolence at present—and I was going with her to see an establishment of the kind. It interested me as being one of the few charitable "notions" which strike at the root of an evil, instead of lopping off a few of its topmost branches. For certainly, looking at the swarm of children one meets in such a walk as this, and speculating on the homes they spring up in, and the dangers they hourly encounter, it is wonderful how they contrive to struggle up, even to that early *phase of infantine life* when the children of the Lon-

don poor appear on the surface of society—society which, from their very birth, seems set against them.

“Poor little wretches! How can they ever grow up to be men and women?”

“Probably not one-fourth of them do,” said Mrs. ——, whom I will call, after the good old Baxterian fashion—Mrs. Readyhand. “In Manchester, not one-half of the children born survive to their second year. Think of all which that fact implies! —of the multitude of tender lives fading out in suffering; the array of little coffins and tiny graves. And the mothers—one knows not which to pity most;—the ever-recurring pang of the loss of a child, or the gradual callousness which ceases to feel such a loss at all.”

“What a percentage of deaths; and in the first year!”

“Of course; larger in the first than any succeeding. You do not know what it is to rear a young baby—the constant attention required—the infinitesimally small ills which are death to the tender thing—and which motherly care, and that only, can or will avert. Why, when I have left my babies snug in their warm nursery, and gone down to speak to our charwoman, and seen her sitting in the wash-house, sucking a poor little wizened creature, fretful with pain, or drowsy with drugging—while standing by was the small seven-year-old nurse, or

the worse nurse still, some dirty, drunken old crone, who was paid a few pence for keeping the infant, and bringing it to its mother for one natural meal in the day—my dear, when I have seen all this, I have wondered that all the mothers in England, well-to-do mothers, who can afford the leisure and luxury of saving their children's lives, do not rise up, and try to establish in every town where the women have to go out to work”—

“Public nurseries?”

“Exactly,” said Mrs. Readyhand. She proceeded to inform me of a plan she had for the benefit of our particular district of the metropolis, a plan that would require at least a twenty-four matron-power in its working-out—the onus of which working-out lay, and would lie apparently, on her own single pair of already well-filled hands.

I felt a certain involuntary blush at the little *I* did—I and the rest of us who have to use our pens instead of our hands in daily bread-winning—for the helping of what pulpit-eloquence would call “our poorer brethren”—or sisters. Especially those our sisters whom we sometimes shrink from acknowledging as such; hard-handed, stupid-headed, dull-hearted—living from infancy a life so coarse and rude, that womanly instincts become blunted, womanly affections deadened; till the creature sinks down to an almost brutal level, the mere drudging, suffering, child-bearing feminine of man. Child-

bearing! ay, that is what makes the ineffable sadness of the case. What hope is there for the children of such mothers—mothers whom nothing can exempt from the daily duty of earning daily bread? Mothers who have to toil in factories; to stand all day at washing-tubs; to go out charing, or nursing, or slop-working, or any of the nameless outdoor avocations by which women in great towns contrive to keep their families a degree above starvation. Families, whom no Malthusian laws can hinder from following the higher natural law: "Increase, and multiply, and replenish the earth."

Replenish the earth! With what? With lives so frail, that their necessary and swift decadence is to death. Or escaping that—passing safely by the pit-falls that lie in wait for their poor little tottering feet every day of every week, every hour of every day—what do we gain? A puny, weak, unhealthy, deteriorated race. A race of which common sense and common feeling are oftentimes fain to believe that it would have been easier for itself and its successors had it laid its baby bones among the hundreds more that pile our church-yards with tiny mounds, long since forgotten—for it is only the "upper classes" who can afford to grieve and to remember.

We went on our way. It was a bright winter-noon. Our "district" happened to be in the paroxysms of an election, more virulently contested

than is frequent in the busy metropolis. There was a polling-booth in our High Street; and all our usually quiet semi-suburban streets were frescoed with posters equally laudatory and vituperative; while dashing violently past, or standing lazily at public-houses, were partisan-cabs, well pasted over, so as to constitute at any other than election-time a series of locomotive libels. All our grown-up world was in a state of convulsion, as to whether the noble churchman or ignoble quaker, the peer or the tradesman, should represent us in parliament; it seemed quite ridiculous that my friend and I should be devoting our attention to such a very small subject as poor people's babies.

"I suppose the election will be decided by the time we return," said Mrs. Readyhand. "I think we start our nursery, I shall be inclined to something from the successful candidate for my little babies."

"But I thought the nurseries were self-supporting?"

"Partially so. In fact, they ought to be entirely, if there were a sufficient number of children taken in. Though I believe the Paris "crèches," from which these two or three nurseries that we have in London are modelled, were altogether commenced as charities."

"Who first started the idea of crèches?"

"One M. Marbeau, so far back as 1844. Being

appointed to investigate the Paris 'asylums' (which are equivalent to our Infant Schools), and where the working-mothers are in the habit of leaving for the day their children from two years old and upwards —the simple question struck him, What becomes of the said children *until* they have reached the prescribed two years? And on inquiries, he found the same course pursued, with the same terrible results, that we find in every large factory-town—the inevitable separation of mother and infant during working-hours; the employment of ignorant and brutal nurses at some trifle per day; and the enormous rate of infant mortality."

"Of course, the child's best and only nurse is its mother. The mother, during her years of child-bearing and child-rearing, ought not to labour out of her own home."

"My dear," said Mrs. Readyhand with her soft, kind smile, "how many 'ought nots' shall we find in the present condition of society: stumbling-blocks that we cannot apparently, by any human possibility, overleap or remove! Our only chance is to creep round them. This is just what M. Marbeau did. Granting—what we must grant, I fear, at least for many years to come—that the separation of the working-mother and her child is absolutely inevitable, the next best thing to be done is to render that separation as little harmful as possible. To this end, it is clear that far safer than the care,

of ill-paid, ignorant, accidental nurses, would be a public institution, on the plan of the asylums, open to inspection and direction from the better-informed class—having all the advantages and cheapness of combination. And so M. Marbeau conceived the idea of a crèche."

"And started it?"

"Yes. At Chaillot first—one of the worst Parisian suburbs; fitting up a room in the commonest way with a few cradles and chairs; choosing for nurses, two poor women out of work, who were to be paid some small sum—I believe about twopence a day—by the mothers; all the other expenses being defrayed by charity."

"The plan answered?"

"Excellently. Within two years, there were nine crèches flourishing in the poorest quarters of Paris. This was 1846; since then they have still multiplied; their influence and opportunities of good increasing in the same ratio. From a single room, they have advanced to kitchens, wash-houses, work-rooms, gardens, and even to the distribution of soups, porridge, &c., to the poor mothers, when at stated times, generally twice a day, they come to suckle their children."

"And for how many hours are the little creatures left there?"

"From 6 A. M. to 8 P. M., the regular work-hours of Paris—a long day, is it not? But to show that

his absence does not weaken the motherly love—  
ery unlikely it could—I have heard it noted that  
n Sundays and holidays such a thing is hardly  
nown as a baby being left at the crèche."

"Poor mothers! how they must enjoy a day's  
ursing!"

"Yes; and of a healthy, merry brat, who has  
een all week well-warmed, well-washed, well-tended,  
nd well-fed, instead of fretting and puling in filth,  
old, and neglect; or lying stupid and sickly, dosed  
o death with sleeping-powders. My dear," added  
Mrs. Readyhand, after pausing once again to allay  
bout the tenth case of infant woe which had caught  
er eyes or ears along these wretched streets in which  
e were now penetrating—"my dear, let political  
conomists and philanthropists work away as much  
s they like among the labouring or non-labouring  
lasses—there is room enough for us all. But for  
ny part, I do wish something could be done for the  
ittle ones—the helpless, harmless creatures in whom  
ies the future of the community."

There was great truth in what she said. Sometimes, God knows, in portions of this generation, vice and misery seem so ingrafted, that one gets hopeless of cure on this side death, and can only give back the corrupted race into His hands, believing in His final healing. But with the new generation, there is always hope. Mrs. Readyhand was not far wrong when she inclined to begin

at the root of things—to take care of the babies.

"But you did not tell me," I said, "how and when the notion of the Parisian crèches was reproduced here in London?"

"Only in three or four instances, and that of late years, and by the exertions of private individuals. One lady kept hers afloat solely at her own expense for months, and went to inspect it daily; another, a clergyman's wife, did the same. The nursery we are going to visit to-day, is attached to a Ragged School and a dissenting chapel. But these, not being known publicly enough for self-support, and dependent only on the charity of their originators, have not prospered like the crèches of our neighbours. I think," she added, "that the cause of failure, if failure has been, is, that the question has been made too much that of sect, instead of wide Christian benevolence, which it ought to be, you know."

"Certainly. Half-a-dozen conflicting creeds could not do much harm to a little sucking-baby."

"Still, my dear, we must take things as they are, and try to improve them."

Here she stopped, for we had talked ourselves out of the bearings of our course, and got into a labyrinth of poor and dirty streets. Mrs. Ready-hand made various inquiries for the——Public

Nursery—which, however, seemed anything but public, for it was only with the aid of great patience and a friendly policeman that we lighted upon it at all.

My friend pointed to the entrance, over which was written: "Public Nursery, Infant Ragged School, and Laundry."

"What a combination of good things! Did you never see a Ragged School? Then we will take a peep in there first. This seems to be the door."

Which door opening, disclosed a tolerably large and lofty room, rather dark and close it seemed to us, just passing out of the bright frosty air; and I, unused to schools, was sensible of a great oppression and confusion of little tongues, and an incessant commotion of little bodies, which only partially subsided when the mistress, blowing a warning-whistle—her voice would have been utterly useless—despatched them to a raised succession of benches, and came forward to speak to the visitors.

She was a decent, kindly-looking soul, with a care-worn, intelligent face, the mouth and chin of which indicated both the power and the habit of ruling even a Ragged School.

An Infant Ragged School! What pictures the name implies!—pictures of the very scum of babyhood, picked out of gutters, alleys, reeking cellars; wretched babyhood, from its very birth-hour entering

on its only inheritance—want, brutality, and crime.

Yet here were goodly rows of small plants of humanity, ranged, height above height, in the usual fashion peculiar to Infant Schools and greenhouses—tidy, clean, unragged children—wan and sharp-visaged, to be sure, but one finds that look in every poor London child. Nevertheless, these were a decent array, sprinkled with two or three faces bright and pretty enough for any rank or class of tiny girlhood. There might have been boys likewise; but sex was quite undistinguishable.

At the opposite end, near the fire—fenced in a safe corner by a semicircle of forms, and guarded by one or two elder girls—was a den of much smaller fry, some not more than eight months old infants, squatting, or scrawling, or sitting bolt upright against the wall, staring right before them with an air of solemn interest.

“These are very little scholars,” said Mrs. Ready-hand smiling, and taking up one in her arms.

“Bless you, ma’am, they do no harm! They are as quiet as mice, and as good as gold. The elder ones bring them, and look after them; it’s a great relief to the mothers to have them safe here.”

“But would they not be better in the nursery upstairs?”

“Why, you see, I let them in free, and upstairs

they would have to pay; and fourpence a day is a great deal to some folk. Besides"—

Here the schoolmistress hesitated, and looked as if she could say a little more, if she would, concerning "upstairs."

"But you think, were it not for the payment, working mothers would take advantage of the nursery?"

"May be—yes, I know they would. They must get the children out of the way somehow. But poor people don't easily fall into new plans; and, besides, they take things rather coolly upstairs. They don't do as I do with my scholars—hunt them out of lanes, and courts, and alleys, and make them come to school."

"Ay, that is the secret." And I fancy my friend and I both thought of the words: "Go forth into the highways and hedges, and *compel* them to come in."

We had some more talk with the very sensible schoolmistress, who exhibited her charge with no small pride. Especially one—evidently her favourite—a well-grown girl of eleven or twelve, neat, fair-faced, with the brightest, most intelligent blue eyes.

"She is deaf and dumb, ladies. When she came, she knew nothing, and could not make a sound. Now, she is monitress, and can teach a class its letters."

How this was managed, I could not understand; but the sweet-faced deaf-mute was as busy as possible, wand in hand, in the centre of a circle of small elves, who were making frantic struggles after the acquirement of a large pasteboard alphabet. And admirably she marshalled, round and round the room, the general vocal procession that followed, in which wonderful performance the deaf little maid, I thought, was the most enviable of the company.

There was another small damsel whom I could not help noticing—brown-skinned, dark-eyed, slender-limbed—of painfully precocious beauty and intelligence, the sort of creature to hang bangles on, and make an Indian princess of; or the kind of elf who, you might feel sure, appeared of nights out of a gigantic convolvulus, or a mammoth rose, under the admirable-arranged moonlight of Messrs. Grieve and Telbin, in a Haymarket extravaganza.

“To this complexion she must come at last!” thought I, watching the agile grace of her descent from the semicircle, the glitter of some foreign-looking armlet on her delicate brown arm, and the evident consciousness of that, and of her own extreme prettiness, with which the poor child joined the troop of her companions,—a troop that irresistibly inclined one to parody Robert Browning’s “great-hearted gentlemen” as it went

*Marching along, twenty-score strong,  
Ragged-school children, singing this song—*

a song which was meant to be explanatory of different trades, with imitative mechanical accompaniments, greatly satisfactory—to the performers. Even the little babes in the den crept on all-fours to its outermost barrier, admiringly, and clapping small dirty hands.

No—I beg pardon, excellent Ragged School mistress!—they were *not* dirty. I never saw a cleaner, neater, wholersomer charity-school. When one thought of the horrible London alleys they came out of and went back to, their tidiness was really miraculous.

“I teach the bigger ones to mend their things,” said the mistress when we noticed this; “and sometimes kind ladies send us parcels of old clothes, and we manage to alter and contrive. Generally, the children get decently clothed when they have been at school a little while. Besides, we give them some sort of a dinner, and it is often quite late before we send them home.”

“What homes some of these must be!”

“Likely enough. But we take all sorts; we ask no questions. You see, when they first come here, they are such little things. Nothing like beginning in time.”

“But you don’t teach them all day over?”

“Bless you, no; I only let them amuse themselves, and keep them out of mischief—babies and all.”

"Ah, that reminds me we must go and see the babies upstairs," said Mrs. Readyhand, giving up the chubby boy whom she had had in her arms all this while, and who seemed very unwilling to be so relinquished.

"But would you like to question any of my children first? Here"—following my eye, and summoning (I am not sure that if you always do this it will be good for her, Mrs. Schoolmistress) that prettiest and most intelligent brown-faced maiden. She came, accompanied by a smaller and plainer sister, and answered various inquiries mannerly enough, though with scarcely as many blushes as one likes to see in a child.

"My name is ——; my sister's ——." [I could not make out either.] "We came from the West Indies. Father was a cook." [Oh, my Indian princess!] "Father is dead. Mother makes soy; she sells it. She sells soy, and ——" [Here a long list of sauces, &c., ran glibly off like a shop-advertisement.] "That is how we live. We are very poor. Yes, we like coming to school very much. We shall learn to help mother in time." And so on—and so on.

I am about to inquire and remonstrate concerning the shiny bracelet, which looks so odd and out of place in a Ragged School. But peering into the little girl's face, a certain shyness comes over me, as if I had no business to pull the mote out

of the eye of the poor man's child. Besides, she elders it with such tender protection over the little sister—and there she is, turning to pat, and looking as if she greatly wanted to cuddle, that rolly-polly fellow, who is stretching out of the babies' den, and clutching at her frock. Who knows, Ragged-School influences may end in her growing up as some kind young mistress's pretty nurse-maid, instead of the gauzy fairy of Haymarket foot-lights, with a future of—heaven knows!

But Mrs. Readyhand was longing after her public nursery, so we prepared to leave the good school-mistress and her flock—the younger portion of which, my friend again observed, "would be better upstairs."

"Please don't say so, ma'am," said the mistress earnestly; "they do no harm. They are very good little things. Indeed, I couldn't bear to part with my little ones."

"That is the right sort of woman," said Mrs. Readyhand, as we ascended to the nursery.

It was a large room, scrupulously clean and neat. At the further end was a row of eight or ten iron swinging-cots, with mattresses and coverings. There was a coal-cellar and linen-closet, a large table, and several chairs—some for great, some for little people. The whole room was in perfect order—the boarded floor without stain or dust. The atmosphere rigidly sanitary and airy; in fact,

rather *too* airy, for the fire was powerless to warm it beyond its immediate vicinity. There was a decently-carpeted hearth, a chair, a round stand, &c.; in which snug little encampment, with her tea-things laid, and her newspaper in her hand, sat—the nurse.

Now, my good nurse, I have no wish to malign you. You were a very decent, respectable, fat, motherly body, with an apron as spotless as your floor, and as smooth as your countenance. I have no doubt you know your duty, and do it, too, within its prescribed limits. But how *could* you sit sipping your tea, and reading your newspaper, over your cosie fire, while in the Arctic regions beyond—outside the verge of carpeting—three blue-nosed, red-fingered little nurse-maids were vainly trying to soothe or to keep in order five or six babies—from the small month-old lump of helplessness to the big unruly ten-months' brat, which is perilling its life—as every mother knows—by various ingenious exploits, about once in five minutes, all day long.

“Ladies—pray sit. *Our* ladies generally come of mornings. I am very glad when they do. I have a hard place here—(Betsy, do keep that child off the carpet). They don’t allow me help enough—nothing like enough, ma’am. Only these three chits from the Ragged School — (Sally, can’t you quiet that baby?). Indeed, ladies, you

don't know what it is to look after poor people's children."

There was a certain truth in this—a pitiful truth enough, though she did not put it so. No one, whose sole experience in the baby-line lies among the well-fed, well-clothed, well-tended offspring of the respectable classes, can see without pain the vast difference between them and "poor people's babies." Especially the London poor. Their pinched faces; their thin flaccid limbs, shivering under the smallest possible covering of threadbare flannel and worn-out calico; their withered, old-like expression, so different from the round-eyed, apple-cheeked simplicity that well-to-do parents love—no wonder it was rather hard to keep in healthy, satisfied quietness poor people's babies. Babies, too, who from morning till night seldom or never know what it is to cuddle in warmly to the natural nest—the mother's own bosom. Of course, nothing can supply the place of that; and, of course, it must be a hard position, my respectable old woman! to be nurse in a public nursery. But surely you need not have talked so much about it, or we should have sympathised with you a great deal more.

We began to investigate the condition of the six babies—small, sickly creatures most of them—sprawling quietly on the floor, or resting open-eyed in a sort of patient languor in any position the little nurse-girls chose to place them. There was one

especially which kept up a pitiful wail—not a good hearty howl, but a low moaning, as if it had hardly strength to cry.

Mrs. Readyhand paused in her statistical inquiries about the nursery, which, however, were fast verging into a mild recipience of the nurse's long list of woes.

"Ladies, you see, I haven't help enough. Such a set of ignorant young chits! Sally, can't you keep that child quiet? Ma'am, it's only fractious; not quite a month old—I don't like 'em so young, but then the mother has to go out charing."

O ye happy mothers! languid and lovely, receiving in graceful négligée admiring female friends, who come to congratulate and sympathise, and "see baby"—just think of this!

My friend took the matter into her kind hands. "Sally, my girl—isn't your name Sally?—you hardly know how to hold so young an infant. Not upright—it has not strength yet; and its little feet are quite cold. There, not so near the fire—you would scorch its poor head. Give it to me, please. Now, Sally"—And laying the child across her lap, she held its blue feet in her hands, supplying, in her own gentle way, various bits of useful information, verbal and practical.

Nurse looked on with considerable dignity at first; but in answer to a hint about "food," and a commendation of the kind of infant nutriment sup-

plied gratis by the nursery, she began busily to prepare some, and the kettle at once vacated its place in favour of the pap-saucepan.

Gradually, motherly experience did its work; the infant ceased crying.

"It'll begin again the minute you lay it down, ma'am. Babies like nursing so; I daren't nurse 'em, else they'd never be out of my arms."

"But they soon learn to crawl—my children do. I always let them, as soon as they can. Look, Betsy—didn't I hear nurse call you Betsy?—you have only to keep near and watch it—see that it doesn't hurt itself, nor go too far away from the fire. This is bitter weather for little babies. And Sally—yes, you are quite right to listen and notice; always do so when nurse or the lady-visitors talk to you, and you'll learn everything in time."

"There's much need on't," grumbled the head-functionary; but her subordinates heard not. They made quite a little group round Mrs. Readyhand, each girl laden with her small charge, whom she handled very much as she would a doll or a kitten. Meanwhile, the eldest baby devoted its tender attention to me, crawling about my skirts, and taking hold of my shoe, looking up all the while—ugly, little, thin elf as it was—with that soft infantine smile which I defy any woman to resist. One could not well help giving it a toss and a dandle, and

laughing when it laughed—even to the missing of many things Mrs. Readyhand was saying. Not in any formal way—she abhorred all cant. I did not hear her use one of those irreverently familiar Scripture phrases which abounded rather unpleasantly on the nurse's lips, and on the walls of the school below-stairs—where, I fear, their large-lettered literalness—such as, “the blood which cleanseth from all sin,” and “the eyes that are over all”—must have proved extremely perplexing to infant minds. But this is a question the judiciousness of which cannot well be discussed here.

And when, on our departure, she brought her kindly admonitions to a climax, by hinting that if the little damsels improved very much, she, or other ladies she knew, might possibly come and choose their next under-nursemaid out of this very Ragged-School nursery, it was really pleasant to see the blushing brightness which ran over every one of the three faces, common as they were, either prematurely sharp or hopelessly dull. But the dullest smiled, and the sharpest listened with a modest shyness, while thus talked to. It was the involuntary confirmation of Mrs. Readyhand's doctrine—the only reformatory hope of the universe—the doctrine of Love.

We talked much as we went home—she and I—about this scheme; its wide possibilities of good, and the defects—where will you not find defects in all schemes?—of its working-out.

"I don't mind the work of the house—  
I think that's the most important part of the  
work. I have a desire to do something. I have  
done some of the housework, but I have  
done a lot of ~~other~~ work."

"We have to be so summary. It's a hard  
life, but it's a good life. The summary is a very  
different one to the ~~other~~ one. There will be a summary  
to the ~~other~~ one too, but I think it will be an  
easier one—of the patient and cheerful  
kind of a mother. I hope this work is good for  
her."

"She isn't."

"Perhaps she isn't. I was looking after her  
yesterday for a few hours. She needs to have  
more leisure and less work. More work than a  
woman will bear, it takes all interest in her  
life, and thus shows her that they are not  
useful. If this were but possible! If we could  
look out the rich idlers of our rank of life, and  
make their dreary, useless lives cheerful by being  
useful!"

"Useful to the lower rank of workers?"

"Exactly. Think of all the women whom we  
know, and what numbers that we don't know, who  
having passed their first youth, are absolutely  
withering away for want of something to do.  
Something to do'—that grand cry, spoken or silent,

of all unmarried and unlikely-to-be-married womanhood; 'Oh, if I had but something to do!'

It was very true; I could have confirmed my friend's remark by half-a-dozen instances under my own knowledge.

"And the grand difficulty is, how to answer it. What are they to do?"

"Surely no lack of that, Mrs. Readyhand. Never was there a wider harvest, nor fewer labourers."

"Because, my dear, they don't know how to fall to work. They can't find it out for themselves, and in most cases there is nobody to show them. So they sit moping and miserable; either scattering their money in indiscriminate lazy charity, or living dependent on fathers and brothers, with abundance of time, and little enough of money; ignorant, that the best beneficence is often not money at all, but time. Plenty of people have money to spend; few have sense, judgment, and practical experience enough to spend it properly."

"I understand. You want not merely seed, but sowers."

"Yes; busy, active sowers. I would like to hunt them up far and wide, and give them work to do. Work that would fill up the blanks in the home-duties they may have, yet not interfere with the rest; work that would prevent their feeling—as I know scores of unmarried women do—that they have

somehow missed their part and place in the grand ever-moving procession of life, and have consequently no resource but to lounge idle, or lie torpid, by the wayside, till death overtakes them."

"That is true. You talk as if you had been 'an old young lady' yourself."

"I might have been; and my little daughters may be. Nobody knows. Now, what think you? Suppose we could only give to all the 'old young ladies,' as you call them, one simple task and duty—the looking after poor people's children. Setting aside all that is done, or is found impossible to do, for the grown-up generation, and beginning with the new; beginning from the very first; in short with—"

"With a public nursery? Well, they might do worse."

"I think so indeed," replied Mrs. Readyhand.

"Many a middle-aged lady keeping house in some dull parental home, or tormented by a brood of lively juvenile sisters, might find very considerable peace of mind and loving-kindness from an occasional hour spent in looking after poor people's babies. Then not ending with them as babies. Following them up to childhood—planning public playgrounds and public working-grounds: I like these a great deal better than even Infant Schools. Teaching them especially—what ought to be the chief aim for all eleemosynary aid—how to help

themselves. Would not this be one good way of silencing the lazy outcry about 'elevating the race'? Better, perhaps, than—this sort of thing."

She pointed to an election-cab, crammed in and out with worthy and independent voters, glorified in shirt-sleeves and drink, shouting at the top of their voices for the successful candidate.

"Lord—has won, you see. Well, I am glad. He is an excellent young man, they say. Perhaps he may be got to take an interest in our plans. But, after all, those whom I chiefly look to for aid, are what Mrs. Ellis calls the Daughters of England."

One daughter of England—type of many more—could not help regarding with mingled compunction and respect a certain matron of England, who, she knew, taught and reared half-a-dozen children of her own, and yet managed to find time for all these plans and doings in behalf of other folk's children. And as, while thus talking, we passed through the heavy-atmosphered, dirty streets, with their evening loungers collecting, and their evening shop-lamps beginning to flare; it was impossible not to think sadly of the great amount of evil and misery to be battled with, and the comparative helplessness of even the strongest hand; of the infinite deal to be done, and the few who can—without contravening the great just law, that charity begins at home—find opportunities of doing it.

"Still, my dear," said Mrs. Readyhand gently, 'there is a wise saying: 'Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.' I know how little you can by any possibility do in this way; but here is one thing you *can* do—you can write an article."

"I will. And then some wiser head and freer hand may put into practice all these things which we have been looking at and talking over. I suppose I have simply to relate facts as they were brought under our notice."

"That is all. And who knows what good might come of it?" said my friend, smiling as we reached her door.

"Then, most certainly I will write my article." I have written it.

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## TRAVELLING COMPANIONS.

I CERTAINLY do meet with odd people on my travels, though these are neither numerous nor extensive—I having never passed the bounds of—speaking Hibernicé—my three native countries. Yet within England, Scotland, and Ireland I have met with characters enough to set up a modern Sentimental Journey; and heard little bits of histories, full of nature, feeling, or humour, that would furnish studies for many a novel-writer. Most of these I have lighted upon in railway-carriages—places fruitful in episodes to one who generally travels second-class and alone.

Can it be that clothes and purses do not confer that unquestionable respectability which it is generally supposed they do? Else why, in spite of silk gowns, unexceptionable broadcloth, and so on, can first-class never trust itself to itself, but must stare in mute investigation of its own merits and position till within a county or so of its terminus, when repentance and satisfied gentility come quite too late? Now, second-class, whose only passport is its face, and only safe-conduct its civil behaviour, has no such qualms, but plunges at once into the evident

duties of travelling humanity, and reaps corresponding benefits.

Nature certainly meant me for a second-class passenger. I cannot help taking a vivid interest in everything and everybody around me. Convinced that

The proper study of mankind is man,

or woman, as it happens, I suffer no little impediments to daunt me, and succumb to none of those slight annoyances, which are grave evils to persons of sensitive organisation. To be sure, I have sometimes met with a few inconveniences. It was not pleasant to be thrust lately into the carriage with those two newly married couples, of the very lowest grade of agricultural life,—especially when the one husband, half-seas over, would balance sleepily between the corner and his wife's shoulder, and the other wife chattered the most coquettish nonsense to the other husband. Still, in one of each pair, I could trace a quiet, sturdy seriousness, which led me to moralise on the future fate of all four, and even to see a wise meaning in the instinctive contrariety by which married couples often choose one another; and which, by coupling opposite faults and opposite virtues, frequently improves the character of both.

Also—one wet day, I might have liked other company than those six rough labourers who pressed

in, accompanied by the unmistakable fustian odour, all brutish and stupid, and the only “cute” one fierce with his wrong in having had the next carriage closed in his face by a “gentleman.” How the man kept looking at his crushed, bleeding finger, and muttering savagely: “He’d none ha’ done it, if I’d had a good coat on my back!” Yet even among these it was interesting to watch the care with which three or four of them guarded each a branch of white sloe-blossom, to brighten some wretched London attic—the train was going to London; and it was more than interesting—even touching, if it had not been so lamentable in its indications—to see the blank gaze of sullen wonder with which the man with the hurt finger stared at me when I asked the simple civil question, in the commonly civil tone which we English are apt to think it lowers our dignity to use to any but our equals, “if he disliked having the window open?” He made me not the smallest reply—he only stared. Poor fellow! I wonder whether, in lavishing abuse on the boorishness of the British peasant, it ever crosses the superior British mind to try the novel system of teaching inferiors politeness *by example?*

But I am wandering from the companions who amused and occupied me during a day’s journey last week, and who unconsciously suggested this article. Honest folk! I daresay it never struck their simple imaginations that they were decided “characters,” or

that "a chiel" in the corner was "takin' notes" of their various peculiarities.

It was a double carriage, meant for sixteen, and nearly full. Various comings and goings took place the first hour, which I scarcely observed, till finally waking up out of thought, and feeling that one must take an interest in something, my mind centered itself in the other compartment on a row of black curls, slightly marked with gray, under a sailor-like sort of cap, and above a very nautical pair of shoulders. Shortly, an unmistakable nautical voice, seasoned with a slight foreign, or, as I afterwards discovered, Jersey accent, made itself heard through the clatter of tongues at their end of the carriage and the quiet silence of ours.—The passengers there consisted of three women in black, myself, and a gentleman, who looked like a clergyman.

The black curls shook, and the brawny hands gesticulated more and more, in the enthusiasm of description to some person opposite. Shortly I saw that the whole compartment, and even those in our own who could hear, were absorbed in attending to our maritime friend.

"When I was becalmed off the Isle of France"—"When I commanded the So-and-so, trading with the West Indies"—"When we ran ashore off the coast of Guinea"—these and similar phrases reached us—small fragments of conversation, and casual allusions to lands in every quarter of the globe,

which at once arrest the attention and admiration of us islanders. Truly, if we Britons have a weakness, it is for those who traffic upon the deep waters. The sea-captain was, I saw, fast becoming the hero of the carriage.

I could only see his black curls; but I was amused by the face opposite to him—"fat, fair, and forty"—thoroughly English, and set off in thoroughly English taste by yellow flowers inside a bright-red bonnet! bourgeoise to the core. She might have never trod beyond the safe pavement of some snug provincial town, save when once—for she wore a bracelet that I felt sure was bought at the Crystal Palace—dragged up to London to bring down to admiring neighbours her report of its wonders. A comfortable, jolly, impassive face, which listened with a sort of patronising smile, I thought, to the wonders of the deep, as detailed by the sailor. I never was more astonished in my life than when, in a pause of the anecdote—it was an account of some attack at sea—Mrs. Red-bonnet observed in the quietest drawl:

"Yes, they thought the bursting o' that cannon would ha' killed him; but I just laid him down on a table in the cabin, and I plastered his face all over with wadding, and cut two holes for his eyes, and he got well somehow. There bean't no partic'lar scar left—eh? You see?" Appealing to the carriage generally, as a mild recognition of her

personal property in the aforesaid black curls and broad shoulders, which nodded acquiescence.

“Ay, ay—they’d have finished me, more than once, but for her there.”

“Her” smiled; and in the aforesaid meek drawl continued: “Yes, we’d some bad business in that nigger trade. Do you remember the blackie that was nigh killing you asleep in the cabin?—only I happened to come in, and stuck a sword into him. I helped to throw the other three black rascals overboard; I was a strong woman then.”

And the lazy blue eyes drooped, and the fat cheeks smiled, in amiable deprecation; while the whole carriage looked with amazed curiosity at this middle-aged matronly Thalestris whom we had got among us.

“Ay, ay—my wife’s right,” said the sea-captain, who thereupon subsided a little, and left his better-half to give tongue, which she did pretty freely, telling in that languid, dolorous voice the most unaccountable stories. Of niggers running away—“So I just thought I’d put a musket to his back;” of niggers trying to assassinate her, when her husband lay sick—“But I just had a horsewhip in my hand, and I gave it the fellow till he howled for mercy: you must get the upper hand of these blackies, or they’ll get the upper hand of you;” of shipwrecks, disasters, illnesses of the captain—“But oh, bless you, the crew always minded me; they knew I could

command the ship almost as well as him." All of which the captain lazily confirmed with his gruff "Ay, ay;" he had evidently long ceased to consider his wife at all a remarkable personage.

Not so her present audience. More than one smile arose of amused incredulity—but always, I noticed, *behind* the black head and its curls. And fat and rosy as the woman's face was, I could trace a certain cold hardness in the blue eyes, a squareness of jaw, and merciless rigidity of mouth, which made me feel that—comfortable as she looked—on the whole I had rather *not* have been one of "the rascally niggers" who offended Mrs. Red-bonnet.

Various turns her conversation took, from these "raw-head-and-bloody-bones" anecdotes—some of which were so cruel that, for the credit of womanhood, I had rather not put them down—to little episodes in the domestic history of "a poll-parrot, whom I took out of the nest, and now he speaks three languages—I declare he does; and for sense and fondness he's just as good as a child." Then, in answer to a question—with a momentary shadow over the round face—"No, sir; we have got no children." Poor Red-bonnet! perhaps otherwise she would not have "put a musket into the back" of an unlucky blackamoor, who must once have been mother's son to somebody.

Human nature is weak, especially female nature.

It can resist an attack of pirates much easier than the petty vanity of telling the story afterwards, with every possible addition, for the entertainment of a railway-carriage. In ours, the masculine tongue stopped entirely—reposed on the glory of adventures passed through—or only now and then dropped a gruff word, in true man-fashion, as if when a thing was once done, it was a great “bother” afterwards to be obliged to talk about it.

Not so the better-half. The captain's wife chattered on, at the rate of nine knots an hour; till the three quiet dames in black, who sat by me, began to cast doubtful looks at one another, and up to the carriage roof, in the mild pharisaical style of thankful self-gratulation that they were not as some other folk were. Even the pale young clergyman turned his quiet head half over the compartment, listening with an air half-shocked, half-compassionate, to these apocryphal tales of slave-stealing off the African coast, and accidental butcheries on the Chinese seas, told with as much coolness as if the offending Malays had been Cochin China fowls.

I had noticed the parson's head before. It was one of those that you will frequently find in English country pulpits—pale, fair-haired, with features so delicately cut, and woman-like, in short, that you instinctively think, “That man must be very like his mother.” Yet there was great firmness in it—

the sort of firmness you never see but in fair people —mild, and not aggressive, yet capable of resistance to the death. The brow, square and high, and made higher still by a slight baldness, seemed to occupy two-thirds of the head. Intellect, industry, patience, perseverance, even a certain sweet kindliness, were all there—and something else, which, alas! you too often see in English country clergymen: a narrowness, a placid assertion of infallible right—the only possible right being that which the assertor holds—a still, cold, uninvestigating, satisfied air, as if belief to him had only one phase, and that was the particular phase in which its defender saw it. The Thirty-nine Articles were written in his face—everything beside them or beyond them being heretical or impossible.

At least, this was the impression he gave me; if a false one, and the reverend unknown should read this paper, I here humbly demand his pardon. For he was true to his profession, which was more than I was; for I confess to an involuntary smile when, shooting her arrow abroad, it might be at random, or it might not, Mrs. Red-bonnet thus broke out:

“Yes, it’s all very fine to talk about savages; for my part, I should like to tell the people at home a bit of what I know about the missionaries that teach ‘em. Lor’ bless ye! I wouldn’t give a penny to a missionary. I’ve seen ‘em abroad.

y're all a take-in. They just learn a few little k boys their letters, and then they go up country enj'y themselves. I knows their ways! Of all humbugs on earth, there's not a bigger humbug a missionary."

More than one pair of eyes glanced towards the gyman. He sat motionless, his thin lips drawn out into a straight line; a pale red came into his k, and faded away again; but he never said a d.

"Ay," added the Jersey captain, with a loud laugh, innocent enough, for his back was to the gyman, whom I do not suppose he had even i—"but the poor fellows mean no harm; it is in the way of business. One of them said to when I asked of him what he went out for: ptain,' says he, 'what do you sail your ship ' 'Money,' says I. 'That's it,' says he; 'so do And, by George, it's the same with all them r missionary fellows; they only do it for the iey."

The clergyman started—his brow was knitted, thin sallow hands tightened on one another; yet he kept silence. His soul evidently writhed within at these slanders cast on his cloth; but he did speak a word. He was not born for a Martin her, a Renwick, a John Knox—he could "keep faith," but he could not fight for it. He could still, with those blue eyes flashing indignant fire,

those delicate lips curled with scornful disgust at the coarseness of the attacks levelled at his creed—nay, at any creed, in the presence of one of its vowed professors; but it never occurred to him to turn and say a quiet word—not in defence of the Faith, for it needed none, but in protestation against the blind, ignorant injustice which could condemn a whole brotherhood for the folly or wickedness of one. It never seemed to cross his mind to say to these ignorant sea-faring people—of whom I heard my neighbour whispering, horrified, “What heathens!”—that the shortcomings of a thousand priests are powerless to desecrate real Christianity. Many a poor fool may close his shutters and set up his farthing candle; or even hide himself through life in a cave of his own burrowing;—but there is daylight in the world for all that.

But passive as he was, there was something in the clergyman's earnest ascetic face which gave a tacit condemnation to Mrs. Red-bonnet. Gradually her onslaughts ceased, for nobody seconded them; and after the first, nobody even smiled. Something of that involuntarily “respect for the clergy,” which lies firm and safe at the bottom of the Saxon heart—especially in the provinces—imposed general silence; and the woman, who was not a bad sort of woman either, turned her course of conversation, and went on a more legitimate tack.

I did not listen to it; my mind was pondering

over the pale young priest, and how strange it is that Truth, of itself so pure and strong, the very strongest thing in the whole world, should often be treated by its professors as if it were too brittle to bear handling, too tender to let the least breath of air blow upon it, too frail to stand the smallest contamination from without. Good God! I thought, if Christians would only believe enough in their own faith to trust it to itself—and to Thee!

We reached the terminus; and, as usual, all the fellow-passengers, like Macbeth's witches, "made themselves air." Mrs. Red-bonnet, the captain, the clergyman, myself, and the three meek dummies in black—severally parted; in all human probability, never to meet again in this world. Peace go with them! I am their debtor for a few harmless meditations; and if they see themselves in this article, it will do them no harm—perhaps a little good.

I stopped at the terminus—one of the principal English ports—our great southern sea-gate, as it were. The salt smell blew across me, and the dim tops of far-away masts rose over the houses; indicating the quay, which is the grand rendezvous of partings and meetings between England and her colonies—England and half the known world.

Having to stay two hours, I went into the waiting-room. There—starting up as I entered—was a lady: I never shall forget her face!

Young, though not in first youth; sweet, so in-

expressibly sweet that you forgot to notice whether it was beautiful; nay, it shamed you from looking at it at all; for there were the red swollen eyelids—the hot spots, one on each cheek—while the rest of the face, though composed, was dead white. Its story might be easily guessed at; for this is, as I said, the great sea-gate, the place of meetings and partings—memorable, year by year, to hundreds and thousands. She was sitting at the table—on one side of her lay a pocket-book, and two or three letters; on the other, open, the waiting-room Bible, in which she seemed to have been reading. Hastily she shut it, and started up.

No, there was no need for that. I did the only thing possible under the circumstances—quitted the room as quickly as I came into it. Whether I ever saw the lady again, how much I felt, or pondered, or guessed of the pang which only those who have endured can understand—I do not intend to say; let it remain between her and me: I shall not “put her in print.” If she chance to read this paper, perhaps she will remember. I will only chronicle this one fact, which was to me a curious comment on “my travelling companions”—on the “heathen” captain and his wife, the silent, wrathful clergyman, the “humbug” missionary and all—how I found her, with her unknown story betrayed in every line of her poor face, sitting quiet in the solitary waiting-room, with her hand on the open Bible.

## THROUGH THE POWDER-MILLS.

“CHILDREN, suppose we go to-day to see the powder-mills?”

This maternal invitation was not very warmly responded to. Some of us, here safely buried out of the busy world, and greatly enjoying our entombment, thought nothing so interesting as our own old ruin where we had nestled for the summer, in company with the owls and crows—nothing so charming as our woody braes, our sunny castle-garden, our ever-musical linn. The mere mention of any mills—and powder-mills—pah! was intolerable. Another fair division—of a learned tendency—suggested that powder-mills had an unpleasant habit of blowing themselves up, especially in the presence of visitors; and life being still valuable for scientific and other purposes, this division resolutely declined to go. A third section of our household—fortunately indifferent to all external entertainments, and willing to do anything, or go anywhere, under certain conditions and with certain beloved accompaniments—merely hinted that the expedition would be “stupid.”

“Children, papa particularly wishes you to go.”

Of course we went.

It was a lovely day in October—a ~~lovely~~ October—resembling that “Indian summer” of Americans boast, and which must be the liveliest season of the year. We set off—your and maidens, mother and bairns—there is nothing more pleasant than a country walk with children. Forgetting the powder-mills, our destination, scorning all prognostications about the doubtful of our return except in a few blackened documents, we gave ourselves up to the delight of the ramble.

Never mind, children, though we slip a step down the steep curved road, muddy with night’s rain, and thickly sown with fallen leaves. One look backwards at our old castle, the turret of which stands out against a sky of the pale, milky blue peculiar to autumn—clear, you feel at any minute it may hide itself behind those white fleecy clouds, and darken into rain. Still, never mind—a brighter day than has not blessed us through the whole year, it be the last.

I love autumn: I love every hour of a day, this; snatched as it were in the very face of death, and revelled in—no, not revelled, it is too foolish a word—but enjoyed, solemnly, thankfully enjoyed, like a late-in-life happiness, perhaps the truest and sacredest of all. I lov-

step of a walk like this—every soft downward flutter of the contented leaves, that have done their summer work, and seem not afraid of dying. I like to stop every yard or two to pull a last-remaining flower, a stray bit of woodbine, or a red crane's-bill; to notice the shimmering spider-webs, covering every fern and tall grass-seed—easily distinguished, for on them the dew lies all day now. Plunging through this wood would make us as wet almost as fording the river—our own river, which we can hear running at the foot of this brae. And there, skirting along, we catch a glimpse of the little nooky valley where lies our familiar bleachfield, with the white webs spread out in the sunshine.

Emerging into a high road, we still hear unseen the sound of falling waters coming up from the bottom of the woody slope.

“We are safe to follow the stream up to the powder-mills,” said mamma.

Truly, this is the very last place where one would think of looking for any sort of manufacture, least of all that which makes of “villainous salpetre” and other material—

Digg'd  
Out of the bowels of the harmless earth—

the fearful combination, horror of many a mother, from the time when little Jack burns his wicked wee fingers with a surreptitious squib on Gunpowder-plot

Day, till—God help her!—she finds “my poor son John” in the fatal lists that in their terrible brevity come home to us from Sebastopol.

Sebastopol!—we can hardly believe there is such a place when strolling along here. What a lovely spot! A deep winding gorge, cut cleanly down out of the hilly country at the bottom of which the river runs; no, not runs, but skips and dances, swiftly and brightly, over a bed of stones, sometimes so shallow we can almost cross it; sometimes settling into deep pools. It has very high banks, thick with trees, or fringed with large ferns; now and then a rough, bare, reddish rock crops out, and makes little “bits” so exquisite, that one would not wonder to find an artist and an easel planted at every hundred yards. But no; this glen is out of the beaten tracks of painters and tourists; nobody minds it; it is only “the road to the powder-mills.”

So we stroll along, marvelling at its beauty, its delicious sights and sounds, though of the latter there is nothing louder than the lap-lap of the waters, or the whirr of a wood-pigeon’s wing. We do not meet a soul, nor seem to expect it; everywhere is spread a safe solitude, a golden Arcadian calm.

“The road to the powder-mills.” We have almost forgotten their existence. However, here, on an old stone-gateway which might answer as portal to anything in the feudal line, we espy a notification of “No admission except on business.” Of course

our entrance is "on business," as this must be our destination. But we see nothing more portentous than a decent cottage, with a border of flowers and a kail-yard behind, sloping riverwards. At the door stands a comely woman, with a couple of fat flaxen-haired little ones; bless their little hearts! they do not look as if they belonged to a powder-mill. However, to make sure, we ask the question.

"Ou ay," briefly replies the woman, and points our way on.

No symptoms whatever of anything more alarming than a lovely country-road skirting the river which runs at our left-hand, while on the right is a high bank all brambles and fern. As for any sign of human habitation—yes—here is certainly a sort of cottage, partly cut out of the rock, partly built of stone, the door and windows carefully fastened up; but otherwise, nothing remarkable. And beside it, greatly to the children's delight, springs from a rock one of those slender runnels that in summer dwindle to a mere thread. Led by a rude wooden-spout, it comes leaping down no thicker than a girl's wrist. We rush to it, and try hard to quench our thirst out of Adam's goblet—namely, six drops caught in the palm of the hand—until one brilliant genius boldly stands under, and puts his lips to the tiny douche, getting at once his fill, not only in mouth, but in eyes, nose, and shirt-collar. Then the children are seized with a new fit of drouth, and insist on

trying the same experiment, which results in a universal laugh, and a pretty general soaking.

All this time, save the woman and the bairns, we had not seen a living soul.

“Where shall we find the powder-mills?” became a serious question; and some of us suggested that they might have been blown up over-night, and be found nowhere at all. At last, to solve the difficulty, we beheld, issuing from a second low round building two—ay, actually two men. Our youngest shrank back behind her mamma’s shawl.

For, oh! how grim to look upon were these individuals—black-faced, sooty-handed, with an odd, uncertain, frightened air. They eyed us in a sort of uneasy curiosity, as if wondering how on earth we had got in there,—but said nothing.

We passed—though at a distance of some fifty yards—another small round house, through the half-opened door of which we discerned a heap of what looked like butter-kegs, soot-blackened. Hard by stood, with equally sombre looks, another of these Acherontic workmen. And then we met a waggon, blackened all over; it rolled slowly along, the green boughs that overhung the road brushing its top, which was covered in as carefully as if there had been somebody dead inside. The waggoner—he might have been Pluto’s own—looked at our gay laughing party with the same air of glum astonishment, and passed us by.

"I'm sure that cart is full of gunpowder."

"Do you think those shut-up houses can be powder magazines?"

"I vow I smell sulphur!"

And surely, in the midst of this lovely glen, through the murmur of the water, and the fresh scent of the dewy ferns, we became sensible of a most Tartarean odour. We had reached the gunpowder region at last.

The green lane broke into an open space, blackened with débris of unknown kind; the running stream was caught and diverted into various mysterious channels, or led under water-wheels in dark buildings, of which the doors seemed sedulously kept half-closed. Another peculiarity of these buildings was, that each was placed separate, within a considerable distance of the other. Between them, a few workmen were moving about with that grim cautiousness which seemed the characteristic of the place. There was none of the careless jollity one usually sees in a manufacturing community; everybody seemed to go about as if he had something on his mind.

A gentleman approached. "Ladies, I think you must have mistaken your way. We never allow strangers through our premises: it would be highly dangerous."

"Dangerous!"—and our old horrors revived.

"Yes, madam," continued the owner, after he had

been informed who we were, and our passport to his domains. "You see, the most trivial carelessness, a spark from a cigar, the friction of a shoe-nail against the floor, might blow up any one of our magazines or workshops—one, or even more; though, as you may have noticed, we place them as far asunder as we can, for fear of accident."

"Do accidents often occur?" we asked in some trepidation.

"Fewer of late years; but when they do, they are rather serious. My house there," and the old gentleman, who, from his comfortable and benign countenance and manner, might have spent his days in growing innocent wheat instead of fabricating gunpowder—pointed to a handsome abode on the top of the hill—"my house there had once the roof torn off, and the drawing-room windows blown in, with an explosion; so it behoves us to take precautions."

"Perhaps it were better not to go," hesitated some of us, and wished ourselves well out of this den of danger.

"No fear," smiled the mill-owner. "If you will follow my son, and go only where he tells you, you will come to no harm."

We obeyed; not without qualms, which, however, gradually vanished under the gentlemanly kindness and intelligence of our guide.

Now, this does not pretend to be a scientific

“article.” Any one who wishes to know how gunpowder is made, must just look out letter G in the nearest Cyclopædia; for in spite of “my son’s” courteous and lucid explanations as we went through the mills, I have at this minute the very vaguest ideas on the subject. I know we went up and down for about half a mile along the river-side, poked our heads tremblingly into various dark buildings, in one of which was a gigantic water-wheel, grinding incessantly at what was said to be gunpowder, and in which the intrusion of a few grains of some foreign body would blow up the whole concern, and scatter destruction in all directions. I know we crossed the stream on a foot-bridge, and for a few moments paused there to look up at a perpendicular rock, chiefly composed of red sandstone. It was about 100 feet high, crowned by a natural turret, round which clustered bushes of green broom, pendent bramble-wreaths, and boughs of yellow birk—a view picturesque enough to be made use of, and exhibited (like our neighbouring show-castle) at sixpence per head, but which here abides unnoticed and tourist-free, being only “the powder-mills.”

I know, likewise, that we might have gained an infinite deal of useful information, had not our minds been sorely distracted by the natural propensity of the younger generation to stand on the edge of deep water-tanks; to persist in penetrating into murky houses, whence issued sulphurous stenches; to show

a fatal inclination to take and handle hot salpetre crystals; in fact, to do anything they ought not to do, and nothing that they ought. A peculiarity, not on the whole objectionable; since a child is good for little without a certain degree of intelligent inquisitiveness.

Well, we ran the gauntlet of the whole machinery, and no ill came to anybody. We saw the grinding, drying and mixing of those ingredients, harmless enough apart, which make up the great destructive agent—the most cursed invention of the human race. We saw it packed in those innocent-looking kegs, and lying safe and peaceful in those little stone-houses, over which beech-trees shook their leaves, and fern and brambles grew: until it should be transferred thence to work abroad its errand of death.

“We have sent a great deal to the Turkish government, for the Crimea,” was the answer to a very natural question on our part. “Indeed, we send it from these mills to every quarter of the world.”

Heaven help the world! There was something sickening in the idea, how, in these terrible war-times, a human life might hang, as it were, upon every ounce of the fatal substance that lay so snug in this quiet glen; how we had close at our hand what may ere long be destined to level a city, destroy a fleet, or slaughter an army. And yet the river went

singing on, and the boughs waved, and the bees buzzed about in the sunshine, and all the beautiful world of nature lived its innocent unconscious life, each in its own way. It was an awful thought—a thought which nothing could ease, save a belief in over-ruling Omnipotence, and in that manifestation of it which makes it to us likewise All-wisdom and All-love.

We ended our inspection of the powder-mills, being, if not practically wiser concerning them, at all events considerably the better for many new and serious thoughts. Quitting our kind guide, who had brought us to the entrance, we again retraced our way to the further end of the glen. The works altogether extended, we were told, for more than a mile along the river-side. Repassing the various places, but keeping at a safe distance, and standing most respectfully aside whenever we met one of the funeral-looking powder-waggons with its grim waggoner—I declare solemnly, we did not meet a single workman who wore a smile upon his face!—we came at last to the utmost boundary of the mills.

I think more than one of us breathed freer, and took a brighter and cheerier view of the outside world, when we had got fairly out of sight and smell of Friar Bacon's atrocious condiments—admirable cookery for the feast of death; and, walking along past a cottage and a byre, where stood a sturdy

farmer-lad with his team, and a lassie with a bucket — both good specimens of that bright, honest, intelligent cast of face which one continually meets with in the pastoral districts of Scotland — we came, by a sudden twist in the road, upon a “bonnie sight.”

On a bare knoll, round which the stream curved, clustered about in all directions, down even to the shiny shallows of the water, lay a flock of sheep — the whitest, the fattest, the meekest, the happiest-looking sheep; not in scores merely, but in hundreds, basking in the sun, chewing the cud *en masse*; and at the sound of footsteps, just turning round their innocent mild faces, but scarcely a single one stirred. They were not afraid — why need they be? They looked as if not a thought of harm or evil had ever troubled their lives. A little way off were the two shepherds — one lolling on the ground, the other standing smoking his pipe; and at their feet the collies dozed in peace.

We began talking to one of the shepherds — a brown-faced old fellow, with a keen honest eye and shaggy brows. Nothing loath, he came and leaned against the little wooden bridge where we were sitting, and listened with a gratified smile to our warm admiration of his charge.

“They’re no bad,” was all he answered.

We asked where they came from.

“Frae Skye, and going to Galashiels.”

"You are a Highlandman?"

"Ay, but no o' Skye; I come frae Loch ——"  
(I missed the word) "by Inverness"—as, indeed, one might almost have guessed by his very pure accent.

"It is a fine country about Inverness."

"'Tis that indeed; and mony guid sheep thereabouts too. But these come frae Skye," he repeated, looking down at his fleecy friends.

"Did you bring them all the way? and how long have you been on the road?"

"Just"—he paused to ponder—"just thirty-four days."

"And how many are there in the flock?"

"Five hundred and forty."

To bring 540 sheep a month's journey across the country! It seemed no easy undertaking. "And how many miles a day do you get over?"

"About ten, or maybe twa—nae mair: they're tender beasts, ye ken."

"And what do you do at night?"

"Watch."

"Isn't it very cold lying out of nights now?"

The old shepherd shrugged his shoulders, but said sturdily: "Ou, no!"

"Where did you lie last night?"

"Out on the back o' the Pentlands."

They looked bright and sunshiny enough now, these fairest of all the Lowland hills; but last night

I remembered we could not see them for mist and rain.

"Come Wullie, we maun awa'," said our friend to his companion, after standing a few minutes more silently leaning over the bridge, with his bonnet pulled over his eyes.

The lad sprang up; likewise the collies. Soon the sheep were roused into a general commotion, and, divided into two flocks, slowly began to move away. Our shepherd waited for the first detachment to clear off; then, summoning his flock and his dog in some incomprehensible Gaelic, drew his plaid over his shoulder and prepared to follow.

"Is that plaid all you have to hap you when you lie out of nights?" I asked, as we bade him good-bye.

"Ou ay! It's wearin' auld, like mysel'; but it's no that ill; and it'll last out *my* time. Guid-day, ledgies—guid-day."

And so wrapping it round him, the old shepherd went after his flock.

"Surely they are not going through the powder-mills!"

No, no. We saw them a few minutes after, winding leisurely up the brae that led into the flat country—the country of corn-fields and pasture-lands. We caught the last glimmer of the white moving mass as it disappeared under the trees; we heard, fainter and fainter, the sharp barking of the dogs;

and then we were sitting alone on the small bridge, listening to the running of the river, and looking out lazily upon the sunny curves of the Pentlands far away.

“I wonder,” whispered one of us, “whether there will ever come a time when there shall be required no such thing in the world as Gunpowder Mills!

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## BROTHER JONATHAN'S PET.

WHO, living within reach of that big town, the inhabitants of which you may hear speaking condescendingly of London as "our *southern* metropolis," does not know the long low line of the Mersey shore, ending, or rather beginning, in the interminable sandy flats of Waterloo?—Waterloo, called by courtesy a sea-bathing place; and so it might be, for a Lilliputian population which did not object to salt water, or to scudding one mile across wet sands to get to it, and another to get overhead in it. For all that, it is not a bad place, nor an ugly place; and pleasant to run down to by rail, for "a smell of the sea," half a mile off. If by rare chance you happen to catch the tide at high water—as I did the other day—and, for a few minutes, the leagues of sand become sea, and the sea becomes a flood of silver, and gold, and diamonds under the paly sunshine of a December afternoon—why, then, Waterloo is not far from being actually pretty.

Ay, even to an eye that hates flatness as it hates —what you please; and would object to living in paradise unless assured that it was not a level country. But, viewed with a pardoning pity, there is

something tolerable, and even interesting in the determined flatness of this region—its leagues upon leagues of satisfied monotony—sea, sky, sand-hills—sand-hills, sea, and sky, in everlasting repetition; no foreground, no distance, no horizon, making you feel something like the frog in the fairy tale—“he gaed on, and he gaed on, and he gaed on, till he cam to the well o' the warld's end.” You have a conviction that you might find the “well o' the warld's end” somewhere beyond—if there be a beyond to them—the sand-hills of Waterloo.

One variety it has, something alive and stirring on the great expanse of uniformity—the ships. Generally, there is a dreary look about ships out at sea; not passing and repassing busily, as at or near a seaport town, but peered at telescopically from an idle shore. They glide so ghostly, silently, solitarily, like unquiet souls adrift upon space—unknown dots upon the unknown sea, watched for a little and speculated upon, then dropping down over the horizon, and vanishing—you know not where.

But at Waterloo, the ships are not spectres. You have there, softened into picturesque form, the full benefit of the Mersey commerce, the “flocks” of sailing-vessels outward or homeward bound, the long fairy-like threads of smoke cast across the horizon by innumerable passenger steam-boats; and when some fine “liner” passes up or down Channel, she sometimes comes near enough for you to hear the distant

whir-whir of her machinery, above the almost equally distant murmur of the sea; you watch her great bulk as contrasted with all other steamers, wonder what she is, and where on earth she is going to.

I thus stood watching a big steamer making her way—not ghostily, but very noisily, like a stylish lady marching majestically on, in considerable hurry, but having no small opinion of herself—up the river towards Liverpool. With her long high hulk, far out of the water, her enormous paddle-wheels, and her low masts all dressed with flags, she made a sufficiently prominent object between me and the sun to catch the notice even of a lazy landlubber, to whose unpractised eye everything from a lighter to a man-of-war was a “ship,” and nothing more.

And so, when finally she steamed out of sight into that misty forest of masts to which the Mersey narrows above Bootle, and I had taken my saunter over the sand-hills, the big steamer still lingered sufficiently in my mind for me to make a careless remark concerning her, when I reached home. Attention was roused immediately.

“A ‘big’ steamer. Very big, was she? Paddles or screw?”

After a great effort of nautical memory, I replied decisively, “Paddles.”

“Long hulk? High out of water?”

“Very high—in fact, with her low masts, I might almost say clumsy.”

"Clumsy! Ah, you know nothing! Why, she was the *Adriatic*. You must actually have seen the *Adriatic*!"

I humbly suggested that this fact, apparently so overwhelming, and implying so great a privilege, did not impart any information to my benighted self; that except certain vague reminiscences of the doge of Venice, combined with that ever-memorable riddle of, "What sea would you choose for your bed-chamber?" the *Adriatic* conveyed to me no definite idea except a ship's name.

"Not know the *Adriatic*, the great American liner, built to sail against our *Persia*!—hitherto the biggest steamer afloat except the *Leviathan*." ("Which isn't afloat yet," I suggested, "and never may be.") "Why, the *Adriatic* is Brother Jonathan's last pet; meant to beat us all hollow—got up regardless of expense—furnished like a palace. And her engines; they boast that her engines are the grandest ever manufactured—I'd like to have a look at them!"

Here the professional mind became absorbed, at times giving vent to its ecstatic meditations thus:

"Only think, 2800 horse-power!—so I've heard. What cylinders!—what boilers! Oh, to see her paddles working!" (I hinted I had heard them, and they made a tolerable noise.) "Of course they did. What a sight she must have been coming up the river! I wish I had had the sense to run down to

the landing-stage—it was crammed with people watching her. She has been expected ever since spring; and this is her first voyage. You are sure you saw her?"

"Yes," and I began to plume myself on the fact accordingly.

"She hasn't beat us yet, though; she was a day or two overdue—perhaps her engines were too new to work. She and the *Persia* will have a nice race for it back again, for they both sail for New York next week. Won't the captains clap on steam and go-ahead, rather! I wonder which will beat! I hope, not the Yankee."

Here the British mind became excited and enthusiastic. It certainly was exciting to think of this racing on a grand scale, with iron steeds of from 2000 to 3000 horse-power, and the race-course the wide Atlantic. As for the stakes—a few hundred lives, more or less, to say nothing of money and property—these seemed supernumerary trifles.

"I should like to go aboard of her, and get a look at her engines," was the prevailing sentiment of the next day or two, till it came at last—triumphant possibility!—to, "Should *you* like to go aboard of her?"

Could a British woman resist such an invitation domestic, following that of the Yankee captain to an enlightened British public?—which an enlightened British public had taken advantage of, and, in the

most amiable manner, had gone by thousands, in river-steamers and rowing-boats, and all sorts of crafts, to examine our beautiful enemy as she lay off Rock Ferry, alongside her rival the *Persia*, during two December days.

You would not have thought it was December, though, as we paced up and down the landing-stages, that great trysting-place, whence, as has been proved from accurate data, 40,000 people cross the Mersey every day, and the whole population of Liverpool crosses in the course of a week. The new landing-stage, especially, forms an admirable promenade of a thousand yards long, with one trifling objection—the bridges which connect it with the quay are so short, that at low-water they slope in an angle of forty-five degrees, down which an adventurous truck sometimes darts to everybody's imminent danger. Once a commercial traveller's gig in going to be put on board some steamer, performed that feat with such an impetus, that it dashed right across the landing-stage, and popped into the river; whence it had to be fished out again, some wit recommending the owner "to bait with a horse."

To-day, being nearly high-water, no such accident diverted the incessantly changing swarm of all sorts of people which makes a Liverpool crowd a perpetual study—landsmen and seamen, big country farmers, men on 'Change, thin wiry Yankees, semi-gentlemanly bearded Jews, foreign sailors and sea-

captains, with olive faces and gold ear-rings; women, too, of all sorts—from the handsome, overdressed “Lancashire witches,” to the grimy old Irishwoman, a pipe in her mouth, and a load of herrings on her head, perfuming her whole route as she passes. A selection from these filled the Rock-Ferry boat, as we slowly steamed away up the river to the immortal tune of—may our transatlantic brethren appreciate the compliment!—*Bobbing around—around*.

It was an exquisite afternoon—full of that quiet all-permeating sunshine which, when you do get it, makes a December day the pleasantest of any for sight-seeing. The air was so clear, you could have counted every window in the houses along either shore; and the vessels as we passed them by, seemed to stand up spar by spar, and rope by rope, cut out sharply against the cloudless sky. They seemed to me all alike; but some of our party talked learnedly of “schooner-rigged,” “brig-rigged,” “clippers,” &c.; had apparently a personal acquaintance with every ship on the river: fought energetically over the sailing merits of the *James Baines* and the *Maggie* something or other—and which had been the shortest passage ever made between here and Australia. They pointed out, a short distance astern, a vessel—small enough she seemed—with her decks crowded, and lines of cabbages hanging to her lower rigging, being towed out by one of those sturdy little steam-tugs.

“She’s an emigrant-ship, bound for Australia.”

“They’ll be singing *Cheer, Boys, Cheer*,” said one, who knew all about it—“at least for the first hour or two. Poor fellows! they’ll need to sing it pretty often between Liverpool and Melbourne.”

And just then the echo of a faint dreary “Hurrah!” came over the water, as if the emigrants were trying hard to bid anybody and everybody a jolly good-bye, and start with a good grace for the “new and happy land.”

Of course, the earth must be covered and civilised; and those who find Europe too full to hold them, are right to go forth into a new land, to replenish and subdue it; but to any with strong home-instincts, who feel that if native land held not a tie, they should still cling to the mere sod, to these an emigrant-ship is one of the very saddest sights in the whole world. Sadder even than one which met us shortly—a boat, pulled by ten boys in regulation nautical costume.

“Ah, that’s the *Akbar’s* boat, and there she is lying just off the quarantine station. Look at those lads now; how cheerily they pull, and what nice faces they have! You would never think they were all criminals.”

No. Certainly not. Round, rosy, honest, happy faces as ever I beheld! And yet these were, every one of them, belonging to what is called “the criminal class,” vagabonds, if not thieves, who, coming

under the lash of the law, had been sent, not to prison, where reformation would have been hopeless, but to this marine reformatory, where they are kept in safe custody, educated, taught a trade, or made sailors of. I do not know enough of this reformatory to write about it; but I know the sight of these ten apple-faced lads, pulling away merrily through the salt water, instead of skulking in a jail-yard—of the *Akbar*, rocking lazily, with long indefinite lines of boys' shirts flapping over her clean decks and ornamenting her useless rigging, instead of the stern stone-walls of your model prison or penitentiary—is a remembrance hopeful and pleasant to any one who thinks at all of that great question, to which no legislation has yet found an answer: "What shall we do with our criminal classes?"

And now we came in sight of "Jonathan's Pet"—that is, we had been in sight for ever so long, but my inexperienced eye had never detected her, or distinguished her from half-a-dozen other "big ships."

"Don't you see her? lying beside that old-fashioned, clumsy-built trader—wonderful craft! Would do actually sixteen knots in sixteen hours! ha! ha!"—and modern superiority laughed heartily at the respectable "slow coach," which no doubt was thought an astonishing ship in her day. "That's the *Persia* to leeward, and there's the *Adriatic*. How small she looks!"

This certainly was the first impression she gave. To hear afterwards of her real proportions—354 feet in length, 32 feet broad, and 50 feet in depth, seemed perfectly ridiculous. No doubt it is her exquisite symmetry that takes from the sense of size, and makes her huge bulk look as graceful as a yacht. Seen fore-shortened, sitting on the water as lightly, as airily as a swan on a stream, the slight clumsiness of build which struck me when I saw her longitudinally, steaming up the river, was not visible at all.

There are few things of man's handiwork more beautiful than a ship afloat—even a steamer; and probably the *Adriatic* is one of the finest specimens of ship-building extant. The eye revels in her harmonious curves; not a line from stem to stern, in which Hogarth's "line of beauty and grace" does not soothe and fascinate one's sense of Form. She is said to have been built after quite a new model, of which the only other specimen is the United States steam-frigate *Niagara*—her shape being studiously adapted to the course of the water when cleft by the ship's prow. Her chief peculiarity is the exceeding delicacy with which she tapers up to this prow, which, from her very small bowsprit, appears almost like a sharp point. As one of our party said: "She looks as if after every voyage she would have to sharpen her nose upon a grindstone."

When we neared her, and noticed how high she

stood out of the water, how the boat-loads of people that kept crowding in seemed to be dispersed over her decks of no more account than a stray half-dozen or so, the impression of her size increased. As our boat lay to, waiting to come alongside, the learned of our company had opportunity fully to criticise the points of Jonathan's Pet, which they did with great gusto. I, unlearned and ignorant, could only gaze idly at a sociable party of sea-gulls, which swam from under her bows, apparently as tame and comfortable as a brood of ducks in a pond; and then at this gigantic floating palace, which had just made safely her first voyage. Her first voyage! As an ancient poet observes:

We cherish all our firsts throughout our lives—

But Captain James West—can it be he leaning over the side, and giving polite orders that the ship's ladder may be made as easy as possible for the ascent of ladies who have not been accustomed to mount what looks like a fire-escape attached to a third-floor window—Captain James West must feel truly thankful when he thinks of the *Adriatic*'s first voyage successfully over. The first of how many? Heaven only knows.

We were on board at last. Most people, in these travelling days, are familiar with the interior of the magnificent ocean-steamers, where every luxury of furniture, living and sleeping accommodation, is

provided for a fortunate passenger—subject only to the slight drawbacks of sea-sickness, drowning, burning, or blowing up. Those splendid cabins, all velvet and mirrors—where you might have every opportunity of becoming acquainted with your own personal appearance between here and America—those dainty, tiny, bed-chambers, so well-lighted and ventilated—those long dinner-tables—and the steward's pantry, where an intelligent but thin Yankee stands, with an air half civil and half condescending—"You may walk in, ladies;" and watches with a grand indifference our admiration of the beautiful "crockery" and crystal, packed so ingeniously, that one imagines the fiercest hurricane of the Atlantic could not crack a single wine-glass. Truly a voyage in the *Adriatic* would be exceedingly pleasant, if all things were warranted—weather included—to be always as they appear when she lies in the Mersey river.

But—her engines. The scientific mind evidently thought every minute lost that was not spent in the examination of her engines. So we hurriedly ran through the passenger-domains, first and second class—the second-class berths and cabins being, by the way, uncommonly comfortable—brushed past the stewardess, who, immersed in a pile of haberdashery, we overheard giving a mild order for "four hundred and sixty pair of blankets!"—paced rapidly from end to end of the upper or spar deck—peered

down into the hold, an awful cavern, fifty feet in depth—and finally made our way to the engine-gallery.

Perhaps, of all human handiwork, there is nothing grander than a fine piece of machinery—especially a steam-engine. I own to have been literally awed at sight of this one—this dumb monster of shiny brass and dark solid iron—with its enormous cylinders moulded as accurately as a silver flower-bell ornamenting a tea-pot, and kept as bright as the best house-wife's best "family-plate;" with its crank—after looking at which, as some one said, the adjective "cranky" appeared an extraordinary misuse of words; and its piston-rod, that, moving up and down, must look as terrible, remorseless, and unswerving as the great arm of justice.

"Oh, to see it working!" was the sigh of enthusiastic professional appreciation: "with those eight boilers, and those forty-eight furnaces—and all that mass of machinery! Working—working night and day like a blind giant, who doesn't know what he is, or why he is, or where he is going, but just goes labouring on, till something or some one brings him to a dead stop. Really, I think *we* have a good many points in common with a big steam-engine."

I hinted that we were not quite such irresponsible machinery; that we at least knew the Hand who built us and set us agoing. But contemplating this

great mass of inert matter, which a few breaths of vapour would make all alive and instinct with power for good or evil, set afloat on the wide ocean, where it became a mere atom of nothingness; yet had to hold on its way, labouring in darkness, but labouring ever—verily, the steam-engine did seem not very unlike *us*.

The "Novelty Works, New York"—so said a brass inscription over its head—have need to be proud of this their magnificent monster, every inch of which is as daintily finished as the workmanship of a lady's watch. It is contrived, they say, with great saving of space and economy of fuel—the 1400 tons of coal which it has to devour in a single voyage, being considered quite a light provender. In return, the quantity of fresh water which it produces by condensation of its steam, supplies the ship abundantly. All that seemed needed was, that it should manufacture its own gas; and various admirable schemes to that effect were started by our party, wanting in only two qualities, practicability and safety. It did strike a non-professional auditor, whose two great terrors in life are gas and the stormy ocean, that to be exposed to the perils of both would a little detract from the pleasures of the trip; but that idea was scouted contemptuously by the rest of the party. No doubt those labyrinthine passages of cabins, so exactly similar, that the owners must apparently find their berths by the

merest accident, will ere long be illuminated like our streets and squares and instead of "Douse the glim," the word will be, "Turn off the meter."

Strange to think of that huge floating castle—quite a little town—steaming on through the darkness, with all its sleeping freight, of which even the list of the crew reads as follows: "1 commander, 4 mates, 1 surgeon, 1 purser, 4 quarter-masters, 2 carpenters, 1 boatswain, 36 seamen, 1 engineer, 3 assistants, 6 superintendents of fires and boilers, 4 oilers (!), 2 engineers' storekeepers, 24 firemen, 36 coal-passers, 1 steward, 3 assistants, 36 waiters, 3 stewardesses, 2 storekeepers, 1 barkeeper, 1 barber, 1 chief-cook, 1 assistant-cook, 1 baker, 2 pastry-cooks, 2 engineers' mess-men, 2 keepers of lamps and oil, 1 hose-keeper."

And the safety of all, with indefinite passengers besides, dependent, humanly speaking, on that one head of the "one commander." It had need be a sound head and a steady one, and deserves a comfortable berth to rest in; which it evidently has, judging by the elegant appearance of the captain's state-rooms, into which we peered.

Then we wandered up and down desultorily, wondering where on earth all this crew of 188, and all the hundreds of visitors that we knew were on board, had vanished to. The great ship had swallowed them up, and they only appeared as stray

groups here and there, or solitary sailors leaning over the side. No bustle, no confusion, and yet she was to sail to-morrow. There could not be a greater proof of the huge size and admirable arrangements of Brother Jonathan's Pet.

"Any one going back by the next boat?" Yes; about 300 or so, who, appearing out of inconceivable nooks, descended the ship's side, and crowded the river-boat on every square foot which two human feet could take possession of. In five minutes we had dropped astern, and saw the great hull of the *Adriatic* gradually lessening to that slender shape into which she dwindleth at a very slight distance. As she lay with her stars and stripes streaming against the still clear sky, and the red winter sunset throwing its glow upon her great motionless paddle-wheels, we heartily wished her good-speed. Ay, even though our own *Persia* lay, a short space off, pluming her feathers for the flight, for she was to sail two days after, and as we repeated: "Wouldn't her captain clap on steam, and run her, literally, to within an inch of her life, rather than be beaten by the Yankee!"

Happy, harmless rivalry! As we watched the two steamers lying so peacefully alongside, with the fair evening light upon them both—the sun going down towards the other continent as grandly as he had risen with us this morning, "making no step-bairns" between east and west—one could not

help trusting that the Governor of all the kin  
of the earth would keep both the good ship  
and that fast-sailing might be the only rival  
only war between ourselves and Brother Jon:

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## LITERARY GHOULS.

## A PROTEST FROM THE OTHER WORLD.

I AM a dead author.

What I wrote, or how I wrote it, whether well or ill, is unimportant now: I dwell "in the land where all things are forgotten." The reason why I am permitted "again in complete steel"—both as to pen and heart—to reappear in the mundane sphere, through the medium of this work, will be obvious in the following communication. How communicated, by tapping, table-moving, or spirit-writing, befits not me to say, and is irrelevant to the subject under consideration. I will only solemnly attest that the sole devil which has had any hand in the matter is the printer's.

I am dead. For me, no more the delays of publishers, the stupidity or ill-nature of reviewers, the praise, blame, or curiosity of the public. Into "the silent land," my works, whether 4to, 8vo, or 12mo, happily do *not* follow me; I shuffled them all off with this mortal coil; left them to take their chance of surviving me; and may their faults lie on them *as gently as library dust!*

For *my* dust, that also is a secondary consideration to me now; yet I have a kindly feeling for the relics of what often hampered me most terribly during life. Occasionally, I wander airily round a certain suburban cemetery, to take an amused observation of a certain elegant vase, with a marble laurel-wreath at top, and underneath an inscription attesting my great literary merit, and the irreparable loss which I am to society.

Yet that inconsolable society is gradually ceasing to name me, either in sympathy or admiration. Shortly I shall be only remembered by a faithful household or two as "Our poor dear John." I am not now ashamed of being plain "John," and should be well content to see on the aforesaid picturesque vase only that name and my surname, with the date of my birth and death—the sole facts of moment to me now—or perhaps some modern version of the familiar old epitaph:

Good friend, for Jesus' sake, forbear  
To digg y<sup>e</sup> dust encloased here:  
Blest be y<sup>e</sup> man that spares these stones,  
And curst be he that moves my bones.

Query—Had Shakespeare any foreboding of, or did he mean any occult reference to, a certain race of literary ghouls, which, in later ages, delight in exhuming, not the bodies, but the souls of dead authors, who, unlike himself, are hapless enough to leave behind them materials for biography? Fortunate

Will! whose "second-best bed," left to thy wife Anne, is the sole clue to thy matrimonial history—whose few scribbled signatures are thy only autographs extant—who tookest no steps whatever to make thy life known to posterity, but wast content to lie down and sleep by Avon side, leaving only that sacred dust, and a few unconsidered trifles of chiefly manuscript plays,—which have secured for thee an earthly immortality!

It was reserved for the resurrectionists of modern times to do worse than Shakespeare's curse deprecates—to dig up, not the bones, but the memories of the departed great; exposing them like mummies under a glass-case, sixpence a peep; namely, three vols. 8vo, charged twopence each for perusal; may be had at any circulating library. After which, all the critics in all the reviews and newspapers place them on a sort of intellectual dissecting-table, where they are lectured upon learnedly, and anatomised limb by limb, muscle by muscle—not at all out of mere curiosity, oh, dear no!—but simply for the good of science and the benefit of mankind. A proceeding vastly interesting and quite unobjectionable; except for any who may chance to find—as has more than once been found—some near relative or beloved friend in the inanimate "subject" of Surgeon's Hall.

I am incited to express myself thus, by being the elected spokesman of a committee of ghosts,

who,—in so far as spirits can suffer wrong, save from the sorrowful beholding of it,—have been wronged in this fashion since they left the mortal sphere. Although to us, in our celestial Hades, all this clatter about us

No more disturbs our calm repose  
Than summer evening's latest sigh  
That shuts the rose;

still, we deem it right, for truth's sake, that a voice from the other world should convey *our* opinion on the matter.

We abide—where, it matters not; as space, like time, belongs only to the flesh. We are often drawn together, as congenial spirits are, in life and after; and we converse sometimes of earthly matters, which we are aware of; for to be a spirit implies *to know*. How, or how much we know, I shall not explain, as you will all find it out for yourselves at no distant day. We rarely speak of our own books—we have said our say, and done with it—but we sometimes discuss the books that have been written upon us since our departure.

These are of every sort: from the humble one-volume *Remains*—compiled by some affectionate heart which deemed the loss as fatal for the world as for itself—to the large and boastful *Memoir* of somebody who was never heard of till he became a biographee, solely, it would appear, for the glorification of his biographer: from the plain, honest *Life*,

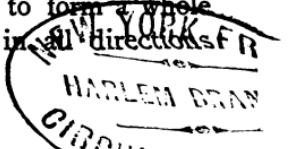
with nothing in it to chronicle except useful deeds, or scientific researches: and the pathetic *Final Memorials*, throwing light upon long-secret griefs and ended labours, down to the heaps of *Reminiscences*, *Recollections*, *Journals*, and *Correspondences*, piled up like a cairn over some unfortunate—of whom, after all, the utmost that can be said, is included in a verse by one—whose hint *his* biographer had much better have taken—

Once in the flight of ages past  
There lived a man. And who was he?  
Mortal, howe'er thy lot be cast,  
That man resembled thee.

And all that need be told of him—which he has not told of himself, by writings or actions—the bard goes on to say—

Is this—There lived a man.

But these ghouls have no respect to the image of man, either spiritually or corporeally. Alas for us poor ghosts! they have dragged into the open daylight all our mental and physical defects; described minutely our personality, living, and in one or two instances, the appearance of our poor corpses after we were dead. Our vices, follies, sufferings, our family secrets and domestic wrongs, have been alike paraded before the world. Truths, half-truths, or two half-truths so put together as to form a whole falsehood, have been grubbed up in all directions.



and either dovetailed into a ground-work purely imaginary, or arranged into a mosaic of most charming pattern—with the slight draw-back that the design of it, and of our history, is entirely the work of our ingenious biographer.

All this harms us not; but we regard the matter as something sad and strange, which may be harmful to authors now living, who, one day, will in their turn become ghosts and biographical subjects.

Thus, suppose we, who most of us passed our sublunary existence like ordinary men and women; wrote our books, and published them, certainly; but for ourselves courted peace, privacy, and the meditative life which all true authors love—suppose we had been aware that upon us, defunct, a greedy biographer would seize; rake up all our doings, undoings, and misdoings; record how we dressed, and walked, and ate our dinners; jot down, in various incorrect forms, which we have no power to set right, every careless or foolish word we said, with our apparent motive for saying it; lure from weak, faithless, or indifferent friends our most private letters, written, perhaps, as others besides the luckless *genus irritabile* do write letters, (on the impulse of the moment, or under the influence of some accidental mood;) call upon all our kindred and acquaintance—one half of whom knew little of us, and the other half never understood us at all—for every possible reminiscence concerning us. Alack, alack! had we

suspected this, what a living death of apprehension, annoyance, and mistrust would have been ours! And for the result? We should either have doubted our nearest and dearest, and retired in disgust from the impertinent world, to leave our bones mouldering unmolested in some African desert or American cave; or we should have carefully arranged our whole life with a view to posthumous publication. We should never have made a remark without considering how it would look in Smith-iana. We should have combed our hair, tied our neckcloth, selected our gowns and gloves, strictly for the benefit of posterity. Our very ledgers, house-accounts, and washing-books, would have been penned with an eye to autographs. We should have eaten, drunk, and slept, like flies under a tumbler-glass, waiting to be put in amber; or like strange beasts, conscious that their destiny is merely from the Zoological Gardens to the British Museum. Nay, those of us whom a beneficent providence removed from the world before the development of the present biography mania, would have trembled lest even on the slender data now attainable concerning them, some literary Professor Owen might put them together, and lecture on them in the character of extinct animals.

This last case is the least reprehensible. When his own generation has died out, and no living being can be wounded by any revelations concerning him; when an after-age has decided his permanent position

in letters, and become at once less prejudiced and more just with regard to both his faults and his virtues—then the world has some right to know the main facts of an author's personal history; at least so far as to discover whether his life corresponded with his works, which makes the works themselves doubly valuable. But that one whose whole or chief intercourse with the public has been by the pen—who has never put himself forward in any of those positions which necessarily make a man public property, should be seized upon as such, the minute the breath leaves him, for the entertainment of the world—is a proceeding the justice of which is certainly debateable.

On the other hand, let us suppose a case in which the books left behind are the one valuable residuum of a worthless life, during which the unhappy author has

Known the right, and yet the wrong pursued;

a life wherein, from weakness, wickedness, or folly, his career as a man furnishes no possible example to posterity, except to wonder how he ever could have written as beautifully as he did.

Take, for instance, Hermion, whose worldly name, did I give it, would be recognised as one for years incensed with most odorous idolatry. What was Hermion? A wild, handsome young aristocrat stuffed full with that passionate egotism and inordi-

nate love of approbation which is the bane of many second-rate, of a few even first-rate geniuses. Consequently obnoxious to most men—though, because they only beheld the fairer side of his character, adored by numerous women; till, whipped on one cheek, caressed on the other, and maddened within by all the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil—this poet, this demigod, who lived not long enough to know himself a fool, ay, and somewhat of a villain to boot, was discovered after his death to be both.

And how? Because there was no one to say “He is dead, and he shall be buried; buried altogether, leaving to posterity only the best and noblest part of him—his writings.” Therefore, over his corpse biographers began to swarm like flies. A fashionable friend, for fear of other fashionable friends suppressing his autobiography, which the man himself had carefully written, and which might—at least from unwilling internal evidence—have had one value—truth—puts forth a garbled Life. A sentimental, kindly, shallow lady-acquaintance details his Conversations; other acquaintances, denominated “friends”—but he could not have had one real friend in the world, this poor Hermion, who loved only himself—they too, in successive years, throng the press, dilating on his private history and manner of life—how he starved for fear of obesity, how he wrote noble poetry of nights, and talked slang and

ribaldry by day; how the worshipped bard of half the century was, in reality, when you came to be intimate with him, a selfish, conceited, parsimonious, narrow-minded, vacillating, irritable fop.

Which, in degree, he was, yet not void of some redeemable qualities, and an undoubtedly great poet, for poets are but men. Was it for his friends to hang him up on a kind of glorified gibbet for every crow to peck at, and every passer-by to shudder or sneer? And will their doing so advantage any human being? Will it not, in those who have not attained the large vision of us immortals, create a belief that all poets must be weak, puppyish, egotistical, because this poet was so? Will they not be led to think that poetry itself must be a beautiful lie, because a man could sit in the quiet dead of night, writing out of the depths of his nature, his best, truest self, things worthy of it and him—yet rise up next day, put on his weak, foul, conceited self, and persuade short-sighted people that that was the real Hermione after all? Alas! for this man, who, like many another man, was tormented with two warring natures in his heart; he lived not long enough to

Throw away the worser half of it,  
And live the purer with the other half.

And so he died; and a fine carrion-feast has he made for biographers ever since.

So has his contemporary, who, entering among us ghosts, strangely surprised to find himself immortal,

Came wandering by,  
A shadow like an angel, with bright hair  
Dabbled in blood—

and salt sea-brine.

A sapient journal, whose comments on us departed often amuse us mightily in the upper sphere, asserts, noticing the last of the numerous memorials of Spiridion, "that it supplies reasons why a complete life of him never can be, perhaps never ought to be, written."

I put it to the conscience of mortals, whether "a complete life" of any human being can be written, except by the pen of the recording angel?

If it be so difficult for a biographer to get at the simplest, most patent facts in his author's career, how shall he discover the life in full, inner and outer, and paint it clearly, honestly, capably—cramped by no prejudices, hesitating at no revelations, both able and willing to show forth undisguisedly the whole man? How, even if he wished, can he do this, unless he were the man's *alter ego*, sufficiently understanding all his peculiarities to place his character in its true light before the world?

And was there ever, in his life-time, any *alter ego* who thus thoroughly understood Spiridion?

Unaccountable as it may be, it is no less true

that most poets are all their days more or less children, and want taking care of like children. The *mens divinior* seems to unfit them partially for the hard necessities of life, unless, as is sometimes—would it were oftener!—the case, their moral conscientiousness is strong enough to force them to acquire qualities not innate or coexistent with what is termed “the poetic temperament”—namely prudence, forethought, common sense; that solid wisdom which, in the sum of life, outweighs all genius.

This, Spiridion never had. Consequently, the busy world, deep in counter and merchandise, houses and lands, thrusts its hands into its pockets, and laughs over the picture of the beardless youth and his baby-wife, running from place to place, intending at each charming spot to stay “for ever.” Afterwards, when with a kind of childish ignorance, rather than wickedness, he had broken laws, creeds, and women’s hearts, it turns disgusted from the poor poet who lives contentedly a life as idle and fickle as that of a meadow butterfly, and, with one or two sad exceptions, almost as harmless. Utterly incomprehensible to any respectable gentleman coming home at 6 P.M. precisely to his splendid meal, is the portrait drawn of our Spiridion, standing reading a whole day long with his untasted cold meat beside him—then starting with a girlish blush: “Bless me, I must have forgotten my dinner!”

And worse than incomprehensible—altogether hateful, and anathema maranatha—is the daring blasphemy of his indignant youth, when, blindly confounding the Christianity of what was then a mere formalist Church with the Christianity of the Lord Jesus, he dubbed himself atheist, to show his abhorrence of both. [Poor Spiridion!—yet any one studying his life, which, with all its faults, was so pure, unselfish, generous—so essentially the Christlike life of love—making even his enemies love him as soon as they came to know him—cannot but acknowledge that many a saintly bishop has been, practically, less of a Christian than he.]

But why write his life at all? Why expose the miserable arcana of a luckless marriage—a disorderly home—which many a man has to suffer, though he is fortunately not written about. Why describe every writhing of the diseased restlessness and melancholy, [that constitute a phase of mental development which almost every sensitive nature is doomed to pass through during youth;] until the fevers and despairs gradually wear themselves out, and the individual looks back on his old self—which, having happily been outlived, has never been chronicled—with a curious mixture of wonder and pity, that makes him tolerant and hopeful for all others going through the same ordeal.—But, while his poor, young, tender feet were yet in the midst of

those red-hot plough-shares, Spiridion dropped and died.

Yet understand us. We ghosts do not wish to lay an embargo on all biographies: thereby annihilating the natural wish of the human heart to be remembered after death, and causing the worth and beauty of good men's histories to be indeed

Interred with their bones.

Not so. Everything that is great and noble, virtuous and heroic in any author's life—in the life of any man or woman—by all means, after a decent time has elapsed, let it be faithfully related, for the comfort, instruction, and example of later generations. The world has a right to hear and exact such chronicles of its generations gone by.

But let us be chronicled, not as authors, because we have written a book or so worth reading, but because we have lived a life worth remembering; the story of which will have a beneficial influence on lives yet to come. If any incense poured upon, or saintly odours arising from, our mortal dust, can reach and delight us in our immortality, it must be thus to know that neither our doings nor our sufferings have been altogether in vain. And for all concerning us that was purely personal, in noways differing from the rest of our species—which can neither “point a moral” nor “adorn a tale,” but

only minister to an idle and prurient curiosity—in charity's name, let it be buried with us.

~ Here, in this abode of calm, where the strongest puff of fame cannot send a single ripple across the sea of eternity, we ghosts wish it were better understood that, however great our writings, we ourselves were but human, and no more was to be expected of us than struggling humanity can achieve; that our genius was an accidental quality, in noways exempting us from the temptations, any more than exonerating us from the duties, of our kind; that, if we erred, it was not our genius, but our miserable human nature that overcame us, as it does other men. We claim for our memories neither more nor less than the immunities granted to others—not authors—namely, that, except for some great benefit to the human race, you have no more right to drag a man's history, fair or foul, out of the merciful shadows of the tomb, than you have to dig up and sell his dead body, to be exhibited in a penny peep-show at Bartholomew Fair. The true manner of dealing with the dead at all times Shakespeare seems to indicate when he makes Queen Katherine say of Wolsey:

Yet thus far, Griffith, *give me leave* to speak him,  
And yet with charity.

She would not criticise her bitterest enemy, after he was no more, without the apology, "*Give me leave.*"

It would be well if some biographers I could name had been as tender.

And this brings me to speak a word on the part of some gentle ghosts among us, who, inasmuch as women naturally shrink from publicity more than men, have been the more sorely aggrieved. I refer not to those who, conscious of living always in the public eye, designedly left their *Diaries*, &c., behind them, elegantly and artistically arranged—a little *couleur de rose* may be—on the principle that

One would not look quite frightful when one's dead,

but still vastly amusing; and no doubt an appreciative public made itself very merry over these dead women, whose life was a perpetual *pose plastique*, and who took care to die in the most graceful of attitudes. They have had their desire; though every one of them may be wise enough to be ashamed of it now.

But for others who lived naturally, painfully, finding the burden of existence quite hard enough of itself, without having to consider how it would appear as a picture for future biographers; who arranged no materials, kept no intentional records, and evidently had not the slightest notion of ever being made into a book—the case is widely different.

The generality of female authors do *not* desire,

living or dead, to be made into a public spectacle. Something in womanhood instinctively revolts from it—as it would from caressing its dearest friends at a railway station, or performing its toilet in the open air. Women's domestic ways, actions, and emotions are so much more demonstrative, and, at the same time, more reticent than men's, that to tear the veil from their lives seems a far more cruel wrong.

And in many instances even to accomplish it is most difficult. [The true key to feminine nature is so delicate, so hidden, that it is all but impossible to be found.] Thus, in many female biographies lately written, one feels by instinct that not one half of the life is unfolded—that much which would reconcile jarring mysteries, and harmonise the whole, has either never been discovered, or if discovered, is necessarily suppressed. Whether or not it be so with men—there probably never is written an absolutely true life of any woman; for the simple reason that the intricacies of female nature are incomprehensible except to a woman; and any biographer of real womanly feeling, if even she discovered, would never dream of publishing them.

Take, for example, one of the most touching memoirs of modern times—the subject of which was a shy, timid, suffering being, almost unknown, except through her books, until she died. Death—waiting but for the crowning of a long-sad life

with one drop of happiness—took her suddenly away in the prime of her years. Now, the public thirsts with curiosity about her; now publishers foresee that any fragment concerning her is sure to sell; now her few friends and fewer acquaintance discover that they had entertained an angel un-awares, and eagerly rack their memories for all possible memorials of her.

So, a Life is written—carefully, delicately, and honestly, with due regard to the feelings of the living and the cherished memory of the dead; written doubtless as conscientiously as such a Life could possibly have been written; but—it ought never to have been written at all. For what is the result of it?

A creature, so reserved by nature that the ordinary attention of society to a “celebrated author” was abhorrent to her, making her shrink with actual pain, is, after death, exposed openly to the world; her innermost thoughts, words, and actions displayed; her letters, written in the anguish of religious doubt, or family affliction, or intolerable bodily pain, printed and published, for the amusement of every careless or sarcastic eye; her books analysed, in order to apportion fictitious characters among real originals, and try to extract from the imagination the history of the heart. Every misfortune, error, and disgrace of her kindred, which you feel sure the woman herself would have concealed to the last ex-

tremity of sacred endurance, is trumpeted out to a harsh, cynical, or indifferent world—of which the tender-hearted portion can but feel instinctively one emotion: “For charity’s sake—for the dead woman’s sake—leave the whole history untold. Cover it up! let her name and her books live, but let her life and its sorrows be heard of no more.”

For after all, what moral is gained from it?—a chronicle so sad, so incomplete, that apparently it does *not* “justify the ways of God to man.” To mortals, on whom its page closed with that last pitiful sigh of hers—“Am I going to die, when we have been so happy?”—it can administer no possible lesson except of dull, hopeless endurance. Many similar lives there are—of which we on the other side the grave are alone permitted to see the binding up of the broken web—the solution of all dark mysteries in the clear light of eternity; but such lives ought never to be written. It is impossible that any human being can write them fairly and fully; and to attempt doing so incompletely, is profanity towards ghosts and men, as well as towards the Father of both.

“I would not have used any living creature as some of my dear friends have used me,” said, in the soft utterance of the unknown world, this gentle ghost of whom I am speaking; “I would not, even had my correspondent been so foolish as to put her heart in her letters, have after her death put it also

into print. I would have done with all her intimate correspondence as a friend of mine, estranged, yet soon to be regained—is wise and tender enough to do with hers—burned it. All the publishers and public in the world hammering at my doors should never have torn my friend's secrets out of my heart. I would have had all things done for her, dead, exactly as would have been done by her, living. Not one breath of the idle curiosity which she hated during life, should have been allowed to expend itself over her tomb. But it harms not me," said the silver voice, speaking calmly, as if of another person—and breaking up the circle from which I, the appointed delegate, give this communication. "My body sleeps in peace among my moorlands, and I live here—and in the one true heart that loved me."

And then—as one of the greatest of poets, still in the flesh, tries to describe, painting the world which he knows not yet, but shall know—

Her face  
Glowed as I looked at her.  
She locked her lips—she left me where I stood.  
"Glory to God," she sang, and passed afar,  
Thridding the sombre boskage of the wood  
Towards the morning-star.

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## ABOUT MOTHERS-IN-LAW.

IN a recent discussion on the subject, it was suggested as an argument in favour of a man's marrying his deceased wife's sister, that in such a case he would have but one mother-in-law. The general laugh which greeted this remark, proved how strong was the prejudice against that luckless relationship, upon which has been immemorially expended all the sarcasm of the keen-witted, all the pointless abuse of the dull.

Dare any bold writer, taking the injured and unpopular side, venture a few words in defence of the mother-in-law?

Unfortunate individual! the very name presents her, in her supposed character to the mental eye. A lady stout, loud-voiced, domineering; or else thin, snappish, small, but fierce, prone to worrying and lamenting. Either so overpoweringly genteel and grand, that "my son's wife," poor little body, shrinks into a trembling nobody by her own fire-side; or so vulgar, that "my daughter's 'usband" finds it necessary politely to ignore her, as completely as he does her h's and her grammar.

These two characters, slightly varied, constitute

the prominent idea current of a mother-in-law. How it originated is difficult to account for; or why a poor lady, regarded as harmless enough until her children marry, should immediately after that event be at once elevated to such a painful pedestal of disagreeableness.

Books, perhaps, may be a little to blame for this, as in the matter of step-mothers—of whom we may have somewhat to say anon—and surely that author is to blame, who, by inventing an unpleasant generalised portrait, brings under opprobrium a whole class. Thus Thackeray may have done more harm than he was aware of to many a young couple who find “the old people” rather trying, as old folk will be, by his admirably painted, horrible, but happily exceptional character of *Mrs. Mackenzie*. He does not reflect that his sweet little silly *Rosie*, as well as the much-injured wives among these indignant young couples, might in time have grown up to be themselves mothers-in-law.

But that is quite another affair. *Mrs. Henry*, weeping angry tears over her little Harry, because the feeding and nurturing of that charming child has been impertinently interfered with by Henry's mother, never looks forward to a day when she herself might naturally feel some anxiety over the bringing up of Harry's eldest-born. *Mr. Jones* beginning to fear that *Mrs. Jones*'s maternal parent haunts his house a good deal, and has far too strong

influence over dear Cecilia, never considers how highly indignant he should feel if Mrs. Jones and himself were to be grudged hospitality by missy's future spouse—little, laughing, fondling missy, whom he somehow cannot bear to think of parting with, at any time, to any husband whatsoever; nay, is conscious that should the hour and the man ever arrive, papa's first impulse towards the hapless young gentleman would be a strong desire to kick him down-stairs.

Thus, as the very foundation of a right judgment in this, as in most other questions, it is necessary to put oneself mentally on the obnoxious side.

Few will deny that the crisis in parenthood when its immediate duties are ceasing—and however sufficient its pleasures are to the elders, they are no longer so to the youngsters, already beginning to find the nest too small, to plume their wings, and desire to fly—must be a very trying time for all parents. Bitter exceedingly to the many whose wedlock has turned out less happy than it promised, and between whom the chief bond that remains is the children. Nor without its pain even to the most united couple, who, through all the full years of family cares and delights, have had resolution enough to anticipate the quiet empty years, when, all the young ones having gone away, they two must once more be content solely with one another. Happy

indeed that father and mother whose conjugal love has so kept its prior place that they are not afraid even of this—the peaceful, shadowy time before they both pass away into the deeper peace of eternity.

Nevertheless, the first assumption of their new position is difficult. Young wives do not sufficiently consider how very hard it must be for a fond mother to lose, at once and for ever, her office as primary agent in her son's welfare, if not his happiness; to give him over to a young lady, whom perhaps she has seen little of, and that little is not too satisfactory. For young people in love will be selfish and foolish, and neglectful of old ties in favour of the new; and almost every young man prior to his marriage contrives, without meaning it, to wound his own relations in a thousand insignificant things, every one of which is reflected back upon his unlucky betrothed, producing an involuntary jealousy, a tenaciousness about small slights, a cruel quick-sightedness over petty faults. All this is bitterly hard for the poor young stranger in the family; unless, having strength and self-control enough to remember that "a good son makes a good husband," she uses all her influence, even in courting-days, to keep him firm to his affection and duty. Also, her own claim being, although the higher and closer, much the newer, the more dearly she loves him, the more careful she will be, *by no over-intrusion of rights already sufficiently*

s, to jar against the rights or wound the feelings of others who love him too—especially his wife, who has loved him all his life.

rely this fact alone ought to make any young wife who is generously and faithfully attached to her husband, feel a peculiar tenderness towards the woman who bore him, nursed him, cherished him—woman in any way tolerable or worthy of love. if not, the faults of the husband's mother ought to be viewed more leniently than those of other people. She must have had so much to bear—as the younger generation will find out when the third generation arrives. Nay, the common cares and sufferings of mere maternity might well be sufficient, in another mother's eyes, to constitute an honorable claim of respect, due from herself to “grandmamma.”

“But,” says the incredulous reader, “this is an ideal view of the subject. Practically, what do you do with the old lady who comes worrying about your domestic affairs, criticising your housekeeping, dictating to you about the management of the nursery, finally cutting you to the heart by saying that you don't take half care enough of your dear fellow, who never looks so well now as he did before he was married?”

“Yes, poor young wife! it must be owned you have a good deal to bear on your side also. Daughters and sons-in-law being always expected

to be perfect—the daughter or son by blood being of course naturally so in the parental eyes—causes of necessity a few painful disenchantments on the part of the mother-in-law. She forgets that she must take her share of the difficulties which are sure to arise, so long as human beings are a little less than angels, and earth is not a domestic paradise. She had best early reconcile herself to the truth—painful, yet just and natural—that she has no longer the first right to her child. When once a young pair are married, parents, as well as relatives and friends, *must* leave them to make the best of one another. They two are bound together indissolubly, and no interference of a third party can ever mend what is irremediable; while even in things remediable, any strong external influence is quite as likely to do harm as good.

A wife, be she ever so young, ignorant, or foolish, *must* be sole mistress in her husband's house; and not even her own parents or his have any business to interfere with her, except by an occasional opinion, or a bit of affectionate counsel, which is often better not given until distinctly asked.

And in the strangeness, the frequent solitude, the countless difficulties of newly married life, no doubt this advice would be eagerly sought for, had it not been overmuch intruded at first. A girl, taken out of her large, merry family, to spend long, lonely days *in an unfamiliar house*, be it ever so dear; or enter-

ing, inexperienced, upon all sorts of family cares, would frequently be thankful to her very heart for the wisdom and kindness of a new mother, if only the mother had early taken pains to win that confidence which, to be given, requires to be won. For neither love nor trust comes by instinct; and in most of these connections by marriage, where the very fact of strangers being suddenly brought together, and desired to like one another, obstinately inclines them the other way—this love and trust, if long in coming, frequently never comes at all. Very civil may be the outward relations of the parties, but heart-warmth is not there. It is always “my husband’s family”—not “*my* family;” my “daughter’s husband,” or “my son’s wife”—never “*my* son” and “*my* daughter.” The loving patriarchal union, which both sides, elder and younger, should always strive to attain, becomes first doubtful, then hopeless, then impossible.

One secret, original cause of this is, the faculty most people have of seeing their rights a great deal clearer than their duties. About these “rights” there are always clouds rising; and one of the prominent causes of disunion is often that which ought to be the very bond of union—the grand-children.

Now, if a woman has a right on earth, it certainly is to the management of her own children. She would not be half a woman if in that matter *she submitted to anybody’s advice or opinion con-*

trary to her own; or if in all things concerning that undoubted possession, "*my baby*," she were not as fierce as a tigress, and as hard as a rock. One could forgive her any rebellion, any indignation at unwarrantable interference, from her mother-in-law, or even her own mother. And with justice; for if she have any common sense at all, she will probably have in many things as clear practical judgment as grandmamma, whose wisdom belongs to a past generation, and whose memory may not be quite accurate as to the days when she was young. Yet the daughter-in-law who has any right feeling, will always listen patiently, and be grateful and yielding to the utmost of her power. Nay, there will spring up a new sympathy between her and the old lady, to whom every new baby-face may bring back a whole tide of long-slumbering recollections—children grown up and gone away, children undutiful or estranged—or, lastly, little children's graves. The most irritable and trying of mothers-in-law is a sight venerable and touching, as she sits with "*the baby*" across her knees, gossiping about "*our children*" of forty years ago.

But, speaking of rights, the wife has limits even to hers. Surely the "primal elder curse" must rest upon the woman who voluntarily or thoughtlessly tries to sow division between her husband and his own flesh and blood—above all, between him and *his mother*. And putting aside the sin of it, what

a poor, jealous coward must she be—how weak in her own love, how distrustful of his, who fears lest any influence under heaven—least of all those holy, natural ties which are formed by heaven—should come between herself and the man who has chosen her for his wife—his very other self; her whom, if he be at all a good man, he never will think of comparing or making a rival with any other; because she is not another—she is himself.

On the other hand, a man who, however low in station or personally distasteful to him may be his wife's relations, tries to wean her from them, exacting for himself her sole and particular devotion, to the breaking of the secondary bonds, of which the higher bond ought to make both husband and wife only more tenacious and more tender—such a one is grievously to blame. People may laugh at and sympathise with the unfortunate victim of "Mother-in-law Spike;" but he is certainly a more respectable personage than the "gentleman" who, driving in his carriage with his wife and son, passes an old woman—the boy's very own grandmother, crawling wearily along the hot dusty road—passes her without recognition. Or the "lady"—who having done as is not rare in this commercial country, married a man who has "made himself," henceforward treats the humble mother that bore him, or the father, whose poor name he has ennobled, with dignified disdain—*instead of* feeling that everything and everybody

belonging to him ought to be honoured—if only because they belong to him.

It is a curious fact, subversive of the theories of novelists, that mothers-in-law of sons generally "get on" with them far better than with their daughters-in-law. While it is no unfrequent thing to see instances of a man's being kindly, even affectionately attached to his wife's mother, and she to him—almost any of us could count on our fingers the cases we know where a daughter-in-law is really a daughter to her parents by marriage. Some cause for this is the difference of sex: no man and woman in any relation of life, except the conjugal one, being ever thrown together so wholly and so intimately as to discover one another's weak points in the manner women do. Consequently, one rarely hears of a lady being at daggers-drawing with her father-in-law. She is usually on the civilest, friendliest terms with him; and he often takes in her a pride and pleasure truly paternal. For truly, women who are charming to men are common enough; a far safer test of true beauty of character is it that a woman should be admired and loved *by women*. It would save half the family squabbles of a generation, if the young wives would bestow a modicum of the pains they once took to please their lovers, in trying to be attractive to their mothers-in-law.

But the husband himself has often much to answer for. When with the blindness and selfish pride

of possession natural to a man—and a man in love—he brings his new idol into his old home, and expects all the family to fall down and worship her, why, they naturally object to so doing. They cannot be expected to see her with his eyes. They may think her a very nice girl, a very likeable girl, and if left alone would probably become extremely fond of her in time, in a rational way; but every instinctive obstinacy of human nature revolts from compelled adoration. Heaven forbid that a man should not love, honour, and cherish his own wife, and take her part against all assaulters, if needful, be they of his own flesh and blood; but one of the greatest injuries a man can possibly do his wife is to be always exacting for her more love than she has had time to win—always showing her forth as a picture of perfection, while common eyes see her only as an ordinary woman, blest with the virtues and faults which women can so quickly detect in one another. The kindest, wisest, most dignified course for any young husband on bringing his wife home is to leave her there, trusting her to make her own way, and take her own rightful position, by her own honourable deserts.

A man has ordinarily little time or inclination to quarrel with his mother-in-law. The thousand little irritations constantly occurring between women who do not suit one another, yet are trying hard to *keep on good terms for appearance' or duty's sake,*

are ridiculous trifles which he cannot understand at all. Better he should not. Better the wife should keep her little troubles to herself, and be thankful that on his side he is well disposed to be tolerant towards her mother. Grandmamma, on her part, not unfrequently likes her son-in-law extremely, asks his advice, is proud of his success in life; and though thinking, of course, that he is not quite good enough for her darling child—as indeed the Angel Gabriel and the Admirable Crichton rolled into one scarcely would have been—still she has a very considerable amount of respect for him, and of kindly feeling towards him.

If she has not, and shows her want of it, she is the unkindest, most dangerous mother that any married daughter can be afflicted with. If by word or insinuation she tries to divide those whom God has joined together, if she is so mad as to believe she shall benefit her daughter by degrading her daughter's husband—truly this mother-in-law cherishing a dislike upon unjust grounds, deserves all retribution that may—nay, assuredly will reach her. Even for just cause, such an antipathy is a fatal thing.

And here we come to one of the most painful phases of this subject, one of the sharpest agonies that woman's nature can endure—that is, when a mother-in-law has to see her child, son or daughter, *unworthily mated*, forced to wear out life, to die a

slow daily death, in the despair of that greatest curse upon earth, an ill-assorted marriage.

One can conceive, in such a case, the maternal heart being stung into direst hatred against the cause of such misery—nay, bursting at times into the rage of a wild beast compelled to witness the torture of its young. This mother-passion, as helpless as hopeless, must be, of its kind, distinct from any other human wretchedness; and under its goading almost any outbreak of indignation or abhorrence would be comprehensible—nay, pardonable. To have to sit still, and see a heartless woman tormenting the life out of one's own beloved son, for whom nothing was too noble and precious; or a brutal husband breaking the heart of a tender daughter, to whom, ere her marriage, no living creature ever said a harsh or unkind word—this must be terrible indeed to bear. And yet it has to be borne, again and again. God comfort these unhappy mothers-in-law! Their sufferings are sharp enough to make amends for the wickedness of a hundred *Mrs. Mackenzies*.

Yet until the last limit, the only safe course for them is to endure, and help their children to endure. Cases do arise, and a wise legislature has lately provided for them, when righteousness itself demands the dissolution of an unrighteous marriage; when a man is justified before heaven and earth in putting away his wife; and the counsel, “Let not the wife

depart from her husband," is rendered nugatory by circumstances which entail sacrifices greater than any woman has a right to make, even to her husband. Every one must have known such instances, where the law of divorce becomes as sacred and necessary as that of marriage. But such melancholy unions are, thank God, the exception, not the rule, in this our land, and form no justification for the machinations of bad mothers-in-law. Therefore let them, in all minor troubles, practise patience, courage, hope. If, according to the apostle (who, though himself unmarried, wrote on this subject with that wide, calm observation which sometimes seizes on a truth more clearly than does one-sided experience), the unbelieving husband may be converted by the believing wife, and *vice versa*, who knows but that a harsh husband, a neglectful wife, may sometimes be won over to better things, by the quiet dignity, the forbearance, the unceasing loving-kindness, of a good, generous mother-in-law?

Let us take her in one last phase in her long life—it must have been a sufficiently long one—and these few words concerning her are ended.

There arrives a season when the sharpest, most intolerable mother-in-law becomes harmless; when a chair by the fireside, or a bed-ridden station in some far-away room, constitutes the sole dominion from which she can exercise even the show of rule or interference. Thence, the only change probable or

desirable will be to a narrower pillow, where the gray head is laid down in peace, and all the acerbities, infirmities, or fatuities of old age are buried tenderly out of sight, under the green turf that covers "dear grandmamma."

Then, and afterwards, blessed are those sons and daughters, by blood or marriage, who, during her lifetime, so acted towards her that her death lays upon them no burden of bitter remembrance. And blessed is she who, living, lived so that her memory is hallowed by all her children alike, and who is remembered by them only as "mother"—never, even in name, as "mother-in-law."

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## OUR LOST CAT.

THE *besoin d'aimer* is perhaps one of the least mean of human weaknesses. Many are the troubles it causes to all of us, and yet we would fain not quite get rid of it, and are, on the whole, rather more respectable people with it than without it. Even for the unfortunate man to whom even his wife is only

A little better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse; or the forlorn old maid who, dying without heirs, endows her twelve parrots with enough to make the fortune of more than one poor family, it is at least a degree better to be fond of some thing, be it only a brute beast, than nothing. And many a brute beast is capable of being raised, by education, attention, and kindness, to an affectionate rationality which makes it quite as pleasant company, as, alas! a great many human beings.

This is not meant to be an essay in defence of pets—often most intolerable nuisances to everybody but the possessor—pet dogs (perhaps the most unbearable), pet birds, fowls, rabbits, monkeys—and the long line of domesticated quadrupeds

and bipeds, down to the featherless biped, the child-pet, or the charity-pet, whose lot is the most cruel-kind of any. I am only going to tell a very plain and simple story about a lost pet of ours, who cost us the usual amount of pain which all who are guilty of the afore-named weakness of being fond of something, must consent to endure.

We—that is, myself and the sharer in my loss—are not universally benevolent. We do not take to our bosoms every walking, hopping, and creeping thing. We are eclectic in our tastes, and though we hope we would treat civilly and kindly every creature alive, still we have never had any particular interest in more than one sort of pets, and that is *cats*.

I hope the gentle reader will not here immediately lay down this book in a mood of calm contempt; or if he has done so, may I respectfully request him to take it up again? I assure him that he shall meet with nothing insanely extravagant, or sentimentally maudlin; that his prejudices will be treated with deference, and himself regarded as a person who is simply mistaken—nothing more. He never could have had a pet cat.

*We* have had—many: the fact that a cat's nine lives do not equal one human being's, necessitating that plural. Otherwise, we would have kept faithful to this day unto our first favourite, “Muff”—fallen in with at the age of three—or his successor, our

veritable first-love, Rose; Rose, the flower of cats, who bloomed in our household for ten years. My heart softens as I recall her. Her memory is green still; and I may yet, for a newer generation, write a *Biography of our Rose*.

Since her day, we have both had several pets, *en passant*—confiding cats who followed us home through London streets, as they always have a trick of doing; antipodean cats, who, changing their natures, would go shooting with their master in the forests, “point” the game, and bring it to him with an unfailing faithfulness; sea-borne cats, cherished during half a voyage, and then missed—after which rumoured to have been seen floating away, helplessly mewing, for a quarter of a mile astern. Yet we have had but one pet who at all supplied the place of the never-forgotten Rose. Of him I am now about to tell.

He was the first-born of his mother, but in no-wise like her—she being the ugliest, stupidest, and most untender of feline animals. Her very kittens she would carry into damp corners and under grates, and there forsake them, to be trodden to death or shovelled unwittingly on to the back of the fire: nay, with some she is reported to have done as the New Zealand husband did with the wife whom he couldn’t keep and was too fond of to part with—*she is reported to have eaten them*. Peace to her

manes! Nothing in her life ever became her like the leaving of it.

But her son was quite a different character. His beauty was his least merit. In kittenhood he had such winning ways that he was continually asked to tea in the parlour; cradled in apron-pockets, gowns, and shirt-fronts; taught to walk on the table, and educated with a care and distinction which could not but make him the most gentlemanly of cats. And such he grew. There was a conscious "fine-young-fellow"ism in the very arch of his back and curve of his handsome tail. His tail, we always said, was his weak point—a pardonable vanity. He seemed to take a conscious pride in it, as a fashionable Antinous might in his curls, his hands, or his whiskers. For his morals, they were as unexceptionable as his appearance. He was rarely heard to mew, even for his dinner; and as for theft, I remember the sublime indignation of his friend and protector, the cook, when one day I suggested shutting the pantry-door: "*He* steal! He never would think of such a thing!"

Have I sufficiently indicated his mental and moral perfections? Add to these a social and affectionate disposition, remarkable even in parlour-educated cats, and a general suavity of manner which made him considerate to the dog, and patronisingly indifferent to the fowls—and what more need be said of him, except his name?

This cannot be revealed; such publicity might wound his delicate sensitiveness. In this article he must only be known as "Lo." No bad name either: there was once a Saint Lo, of knightly memory; so "Lo" is well suited to designate the most chivalrous of cats.

He grew up to maturity in the house where he was born. For three years his familiar apple-tree, on which he tried his youthful claws, blossomed and bore; for three years, the sparrows in the thorn and willow provided him with a little useful recreation —no worse, certainly, than deer-stalking and hare-hunting; and then his destiny darkened. We were about to flit—a long flitting of some hundred miles and more; and of all the questions involved therein, one of the most difficult was, What was to be done with Lo? We could not leave him; we did not like to give him away; and yet we feared that the cry, "A new home—who'll follow?" would never be responded to by him. The most frequent suggestion was to take his photograph, and then give him a little dose of the "fixing" material, which would "fix" both him and his likeness for ever in this world, and save all further trouble. But this idea was not likely to be carried out.

"Where there's a will there's a way." I made up my mind concerning him.

On the day of the flitting—when he was lying peacefully and unconsciously on his native kitchen

hearth, which he was never more to behold—I carried him, purring and fondling me, to an empty room upstairs, and locked him in, together with a hamper and dinner. He did not quite understand the proceeding, but accommodated himself to circumstances, and lay down to sleep in the sunshine. There, ignorant of the black future, he passed his day. At nightfall I packed him and sewed him up, still purring, in the hamper of his woes. From that hour there was no more peace for our unfortunate Lo.

He, with myself, was taken in for a week by a benevolent family, who kept a bird. This necessitated Lo's solitary confinement in a wash-house. Thither, almost exanimate from fright—I believe he even fainted in my arms—was he conveyed: and there, though visited, fed, and condoled with, he remained in a state of mind and body of indescribable wretchedness—sleeping in the copper, and at the least noise retiring for refuge up the chimney. His appearance, when being repacked for his second journey, was that of a disconsolate, half-idiotic sweep.

Through all the roar of London, on the top of cab or omnibus, was borne the luckless cat. What could he have thought of the great Babel? he who, among suburban gardens and fields, had passed his peaceful days. He never uttered a sound; not even when, finding no boy at hand, I took up his hamper

myself, and carried it the length of a square, conversing with him meantime, till the sight of a passer-by turning round, reminded me that this might possibly convey to the public in general the impression of my being slightly insane. One pause he had in his miseries—one happy evening by a charitable kitchen hearth, and then he was, hamper and all, consigned to the parcel-van of the northern mail.

“Please take care of it—it’s a cat.”

“A what, ma’am?” asked the magnificent-looking guard.

“A cat—a live cat.”

He laughed. “O yes, ma’am—all right.” And so I bade poor Lo a temporary farewell.

Letters communicated his well-being. He had arrived at home—had recovered from his first paroxysms of terror—had even begun to wash himself and appear like a cat of civilised mien. There was hope that I should find him sitting happily on the hearth, which, we are weak enough to fancy, never looks quite comfortable and home-like without a cat. But hope deceived. My first question on my return: “How is he?” was answered dolefully: “He has run away.”

Ay, just when his troubles were ended, when his mistress was coming home, when all the delights of milk and cream, sunshiny lawns to sleep on, green trees to climb, mice, and—dare I say it?—young

birds to eat, were opening before him—he ran away! I returned to a catless fireside.

Of course, every search was made: a reward offered, the village policeman applied to; but day after day passed, and no sight of Lo. Sometimes lying rumours reached us of his being seen in gardens, or scampering across fields, or sheltering in some stable or barn. Once, the policeman paid us a special visit, stating formally his knowledge of his whereabouts, and that every measure should be taken for his recovery; but even the professional skill, worthy of being exercised on some distinguished criminal, failed with regard to our cat. We had almost given him up for lost.

Now, one ought never patiently to submit to any loss, till all possible means tried, and failing, have proved it to be irremediable. One evening after he had been a week missing, and, taking into account his exceedingly shy and timid disposition, the strange country in which he had lost himself, and his utter ignorance of ill usage, we began to relinquish all hope of his return, I resolved to go in search of the cat myself. A scheme about as wild as starting to hunt up a brother in Australia, or a friend in the far west—a sort of “Evangeline” expedition. Yet most women reading Longfellow’s exquisite poem, must feel that such a proceeding as Evangeline’s would be perfectly natural, reasonable, and probable, under similar circumstances. Who

among us would not do the same for any beloved? Why not then, in a small way, for an unfortunate cat?

So, after tea, I went out. It was a lovely evening, with hedges just budding, and thrushes just beginning to pipe out that peculiar rich note which always reminds one of the return of spring—an evening when one enjoys, and likes to think of all those belonging to one as enjoying, the renewal of nature, life, and hope. I did not like to think of even my cat—my poor cat, for whom was no after-life, no immortal and eternal spring—dying in a ditch, or starved, beaten, ill-used, till death was the kindest hope I could have for him. I almost wished I had taken his friend's advice, that we had photographed him, and "fixed" him, safe from all mortal care.

At the nearest house, where he had once been seen, and where I had inquired the day before, both the civil husband and pleasant-looking wife knew quite well "the lady who had lost her cat:" they sympathised; and I felt sure that if he appeared again he would be coaxed, caught, and brought safe home. I then continued my pilgrimage.

Door after door did I attack with the stereotyped inquiry: "Have you seen a strange cat? I have lost my pet cat, which I brought all the way from London; he is a great beauty, gray, with a particularly fine tail. I will give five shillings to

anybody who brings him back; my name and address are so and so."

This brief and simple formula was repeated, with slight *ad libitum* variations, from house to house within a mile. Once I ventured to address a milk-woman, with no result; she was a stranger: and once a little boy, playing about the road; whom I afterwards heard commenting to a friend in this wise: "I say, Jack, that lady's hunting after a strange cat. He, he, he! I wouldn't hunt after a strange cat—would you?"

Equally unsympathetic was an elderly gentleman, the owner of a beautiful house, garden, and conservatory, and who came most politely to the door, his bonnie little grand-daughter holding by his hand. He had a fine face, long silvery hair, was bland and amiable of demeanour, reminding me of Mr. Dickens's "Casby the Patriarch."

"Madam," said he, after hearing my tale, "if feline animals are allowed to inhabit such a place, I devoutly wish all the cats in this world were—in paradise! They are the ruin of us horticulturists. Do not regret your cat. I can supply you out of my garden with any number, dead or alive."

I explained that mine was an individual pet.

"Then, madam, could you not place your affections upon pets more worthy?" and he stroked the little girl's pretty flaxen hair. "I am sorry to wound *your feelings*; but there have been—and I should

rather regret their leaving—some Birmingham people in this neighbourhood who make a trade of catching and skinning—cats."

I turned away horrified, yet could hardly forbear a smile; the eccentric, but, I firmly believe, well-meaning old gentleman, received my adieu, and bowed me to the very gate.

Many another house I tried; my search having one result—namely, the discovery that I had a number of nice neighbours—old ladies, neat as a new pin; spruce parlour-maids; kindly mistresses, mostly with babies—such an abundance of civil tongues, and pleasant, good-natured, nay, handsome faces, as might well be satisfactory to a new-comer into this country place. I also gained one consolation, that it was the safest neighbourhood in which Lo could possibly have been lost, since all the good folk seemed personally acquainted, not only with one another, but with one another's cats. Ours might yet turn up, or, if not, might find an asylum in the bosom of some unknown family, who would console him for the cruel mistress and uncomprehended miseries which doubtless had unsettled his reason, and driven him to despairing flight.

So, having done all that could be done, I was fain to turn homeward—

In the spring twilight, in the coloured twilight,  
—never seen except in spring. It tinted the bare

trees and brown hedges, throwing over the whole sky a tender light, and changing the shiny bit of far-away western sea into a lake of glowing roses. Wonderful was the peace over all animate and inanimate nature, as it lay, waiting in faith the step-by-step advance of another unknown year.

Passing the lodge of the big house of the village—an open door, fire-light, and children's prattle, inspired me with one last vague hope. I knocked.

"Have you seen," &c., &c., &c., as usual.

No. Yet the sight disclosed almost atoned for the disappointment. An interior, such as only an English cottage could furnish; a cottager's wife, such as Morland or Gainsborough would have delighted to immortalise. Her face, healthy, fair, and sweet—nay, downright beautiful, was reflected feature by feature in two other little faces—one staring out bravely from beside mother, the other half-hidden in her gown. The latter charming little face, which no persuasions could allure from its shelter, was itself worth the whole evening's pilgrimage to look at; and the centre picture, half twilight, half fire-light, is a thing to be set down in memory, among passing glimpses of unutterably beautiful fragments, which remain daguerreotyped as such, for ever.

This episode, with the rest, amused us for some time, when, coming home, we talked over our chances of recovering our lost pet; conjecturing that, *for a month to come*, we should have all the *stray*

cats of the neighbourhood brought to us for recognition—except the right one. But to “greet ower spilt milk” is not our custom. So, having done our best, we dismissed the subject.

Next day, sitting at work, I heard a scuffle in the hall; the door was flung joyfully open—

“Ma’am, there’s your cat.”

It was indeed Lo. Gaunt, scared, dirty; fierce with hunger, and half wild with fright, the poor runaway was brought home to his mistress’s arms.

After the immemorial fashion, I drop a veil over the pathetic scene which followed.

\* \* \* \* \*

He now lies fast asleep at my feet. He has made a clean breast of it—that is to say, he has resumed his usual costume of white shirt-front and white stockings, which contributes so largely to his gentlemanly appearance. He has also gradually lost his scared look, and is coming into his right mind. A few minutes since, he was walking over my desk, arching his poor thin back in the ancient fashion, and sweeping my face with his sadly diminished but still inimitable tail; putting his paws on my shoulders, and making frantic efforts at an affectionate salutation—had I not a trifling objection to that ceremony.

Surely, after all this bitter experience, he will recognise his truest friends—true even in their unkindness; will believe in his new quarters as home, *and play the prodigal no more.*

Poor Lo! I hope it is not applying profanely  
the noblest sentiments of the human heart," if as  
lies there, snugly and safely, I involuntarily hum  
myself a verse out of *The Clerk's Twa Sons of  
Wsenford*:

The hallow days o' Yule were come,  
And the nichts were lang and mirk,  
When in there cam her ain twa sons,  
Wi' their hats made o' the birk.

Blaw up the fire now, maidens mine,  
Bring water frae the well:  
For a' my house sall feast this nicht,  
Since my twa sons are well.

And she has gane and made their bed,  
She's made it saft and fine,  
And she's happit them in her gay mantil,  
Because they were her ain.

less us, what would "Mr. Casby" say?)

I here end my story. For—since fortune is  
sle, and affection often vain—better end it now;  
st, as Madame Cottin says in the final sentence of  
*or Exiles of Siberia*—"did I continue this history,  
might have to chronicle a new misfortune."

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## MY BABES IN THE WOOD.

WHICH was the title jocularly given in our household to an interesting young family, reared this summer in a hole in the trunk of a venerable apple-tree, at the corner of the garden. Children, shall I tell you their history?—"beginning at the very beginning," which you know you like.

It was towards the end of May, and our garden was becoming a perfect aviary. It is a very old-fashioned garden, stocked with ancient fruit-trees;

Apple and pear, and plum and cherry,  
Or anything else to make us merry,

as many a bird sang, or meant to sing, in bird language: with luxuriant undergrowth of currants, gooseberries, raspberries, running almost wild. In this paradise are admitted neither guns, nor traps, nor bird-nesting boys; so we presume it is a region well-known to all our feathered neighbours; and that they mention it to one another privately—under the rose, or the hawthorn-bush—as "a most desirable place for house-building."

We had concerts gratis all day over, mingled with chirpings and squabbings among the sparrows,

the most quarrelsome birds alive; and a few inexplicable "rows" of a general kind, after which a cuckoo would be seen flying, in her lazy, heavy way, from the scene of dispute, pursued by a great clamour of lesser birds. Mrs. C., however, seemed indifferent to public opinion; would settle herself on a tree in the field, and indulge us with her soft, plaintive "Cuck-oo! Cuck-oo!" till she was tired.

Nest-building was at its height—namely, the tree-tops. The most important mansion was owned by a pair of anonymous birds—I believe of the thrush species, though they did not sing. They had gone about their domestic affairs so silently that the family were nearly fledged before the nest was discovered. Afterwards, for days, they gave me no little disquietude. I used to be disturbed at inconvenient seasons, from work or talk, by the misery of these big ungainly birds—they were nearly as large as pigeons—which kept flying frantically about the garden, and screeching discordantly, all because a curious but perfectly well-intentioned lad was peering into their nest. If my pet cat happened to lie in sleepiest innocence on the parlour window-sill, these indignant parents would swoop fiercely past him, close enough to have pecked his eyes out, and sit screeching at him from the neighbouring tree. He never took any notice; but since feline nature is weak, especially on the subject of birds, from the *day that the nest was vacated, and more than one*

newly fledged youngster was seen hopping awkwardly about under the gooseberry-bushes, I was kept in mortal fear lest my cat should walk in at the window with a young thrush in his mouth. No such disaster happened; yet, I confess, that when the thrush family finally disappeared, it was a great relief to my mind.

My next friends were a pair of tomtits, which took possession of a crack in the wall, underneath my bed-room window. Their privacy was extreme. It was a mystery how they contrived to creep in and out of a hole, apparently not big enough to admit a large blue-bottle fly; and their little family must have been reared in very cramped lodgings. Nobody ever saw the young ones, for it would be impossible to get at them. Yet it was pleasant of a morning to watch the old birds flying to and fro, hanging a moment outside of the crack, and then popping in. They were very pretty birds—the papa especially—a most natty little fellow, delicately shaped, with a glossy blue-black head. After feeding-time was over, he used to go and sit on the nearest tree, in sight of his domestic establishment, brushing up his feathers, and singing “tit, tit, tit,” the utmost he could do. When at last this worthy little couple vanished—children and all—I rather missed them from the crack in the wall.

But of all my garden families, the one most

cared for was that which I have to-day lost—my babes in the wood. Let me resume their history.

It was about the end of May, when in my daily walk before breakfast—which you will find is the very best hour for observing birds or anything else in nature—I found that, whenever I passed a particular corner, I always startled some large bird, which flew away in alarm. At last I saw it—beak, head, and all, emerging from a hole in a half-decayed apple-tree. It was a blackbird.

“So, my friend,” said I, “you are evidently bent on settling—a very laudable proceeding—and you shall not be disturbed.”

Therefore, though I passed the tree twenty times a day, and each time out flew a bird, for many days I generously abstained from taking any notice of the busy little house-builders. At last, after watching one of them scramble out of the hole—the hen-bird probably, as she was large, clumsy, and brownish—(it really is hard that the female of most birds should generally be so much less good-looking than the male); I ventured to look in. There, with some difficulty, I saw, a foot or more deep in the hollow tree, four bluish eggs.

Considering them now fairly settled in house-keeping, I took every opportunity that their shyness allowed, of becoming acquainted with the new-comers. Soon I knew them well by sight, and they certainly *had a fair chance of reciprocating the compliment.*

Gradually, they showed less fear; and though that peculiar cry, half twitter, half screech, which seemed used as a signal of alarm between the parents, was still uttered, it was not in that shrill pitiful anguish which makes one feel that

To rob a poor bird of its young,

or even to make it apprehensive on the point, almost transforms one, in one's own conscience, to an ogre killing a baby.

The old birds were a goodly pair. Mr. B., as I named him, was an uncommonly handsome little gentleman—jet-black, with the slenderest figure, the yellowest bill, the brightest eyes; quite a beau among blackbirds. But with all his beauty, he was the most attentive of husbands, and the most cheerful and musical. He had great richness and variety of song, made distinct turns and trills; nay, I once heard him execute a distinct shake on two notes. He never tired of singing. Lying awake one night, I heard him begin with the dawn, loud as ever; and in showery weather, his exuberant carols lasted all day long.

But the treat of treats was to watch him perched on the topmost spray of a poplar, not yet fully in leaf, so that his delicate shape was clearly discernible against the sky; and listen to him in the still June evening, singing to his wife and family a song that almost brought the tears into one's eyes, to think

there should be such a happy creature in the world.

Meantime, the world jogged on as it will: and all sorts of things were week after week happening to everybody in it, while peaceful in his garden, which, no doubt, he looked upon as his own personal property,—currants, raspberry-bushes, and all—

That blithe and indefatigable bird  
Still his redundant song of love and joy preferred.

Mrs. B., I rarely saw—not even when looking down into the nest, though she was probably there all the while, brooding dusky and motionless over the four eggs. You may have noticed that nothing alive is so absolutely motionless as a hen-bird sitting on her nest. You may go up to her, almost put your hand upon her, and not a feather will stir; hardly a twinkle of the bright observant eye will betray her consciousness of your presence, or the maternal agony which at the last minute, and not till then, drives her away by the mere instinct of self-preservation from her rifled home. I wonder how any boy, who ever had a home and a mother, *can* take a bird's nest.

I thought the eggs a long time hatching; but that was Mrs. B.'s affair, not mine. One fine morning, passing the apple-tree, I heard a chirp, weak and faint, but still the chirp of a living thing, and felt as pleased as—well, as most people are when silly,

young, helpless things of any sort are newly introduced into the business of this world. But the parents flew about so wildly, and appeared in such a frantic state of mind, that I had not the heart to frighten them further by looking into the nest. Next day, in their absence, I did so; and lo! four wide-open mouths—mouths and nothing else—stretched themselves up from the bottom of the hole, in true infantine fashion clamorously demanding “something to eat.”

“My young friends,” thought I, “your papa and mamma are likely to have a busy life of it, if this is your behaviour on the second day of your existence.”

But the third, fourth, and all following days it was just the same. I never saw any young creatures—including kittens and babies—so incessantly and preternaturally hungry. As soon as my step was heard passing, arose from the heart of the apple-tree that eager “chirp, chirp, chirp,” and there were those four gaping beaks, or sometimes three, one having apparently had its worm and retired content—ravenously appealing to me for their breakfast. Very flattering—to be mistaken for an old blackbird!

In process of time, my “young family,” as they began to be called, grew wiser and less clamorous; but still, they always chirped when I looked in at *the nest*, and their parents, seeing no ill result, be-

came more at ease, even familiar. Many a morning, as I sat reading under a tree, about three yards off, Mrs. B. would come and sit on the bough within a few inches of her nursery, and hold a soft chirping conversation with her little ones, while her husband was practising his florid music on the topmost branch of the tree. They were a very happy family, I do think, and a pattern to many unfeathered families far and near.

One night in June we had a terrific storm. The thunder, close overhead, rolled through the heavy dawn like parks of artillery; the rain came dripping through the roof and soaking in at the window-sills. We afterwards heard, with no great surprise, of churches struck, wheat-stacks burned up, and trees in the next garden blasted by the lightning; but amidst all these disasters, I grieve to confess, one of my most prominent thoughts was: What will become of my young blackbirds? For their hole being open to the sky, I expected the torrents of rain would have filled it like a tub, and drowned them, poor wee things! in their nest.

How this did not happen, I even now am puzzled to decide; whether the rain soaked safely through the wood, or the parents, turning their wings into umbrellas, sat patiently over the opening of the hole till the storm was passed. But next morning, when I paddled through the dripping garden to see if they were alive, there they were,

all four, as perky and hungry as ever! And at noon, a stray sunbeam piercing into their shadowy nursery gave me a distinct vision of the whole family, sound asleep, packed tightly together with their heads over one another's backs, not a feather ruffled —they had feathers now—among the whole brood. What cared they for thunder-storms?

They throve apace. Once, coming suddenly round the corner, I saw on the edge of the hole the drollest little head, all beak and eyes, which looked about for a minute, and then popped down again. Doubtless, the eldest of the family, an adventurous and inquisitive young bird, desirous to investigate the world for himself—after which he and the rest were probably well scolded by the old blackbirds, and advised caution; for sometimes the silence in the nest was such that I thought they had all flown, till I caught sight of the four little yellow bills and eight twinkling eyes.

Still, one now might daily expect their departure; and I own to an uncomfortable feeling at thought of the empty nest, until an incident happened which reconciled me to the natural course of things.

One morning, at our railway station, I overheard two of my neighbours conversing.

“Yes,” said one, “they are very great annoyances in gardens. I shot this morning a fellow which no

doubt had his nest somewhere near—a remarkably fine blackbird."

"Sir," I was just on the point of saying, "was it *my* blackbird?—have you dared to shoot *my* blackbird?" and a thrill of alarm, mixed with a sensation so fierce that I now smile to recall it, passed through me, and remained long after I became aware of the ludicrous impossibility of expressing it. If I could have given "a piece of my mind" to that stout middle-aged gentleman—who went on saying what a good shot he was, and how many birds he usually killed in his garden of a morning—he might not have gone into town to his office so composedly.

The wrong he did, however, was to some other "young family," not mine. I found them chirping away, neither fatherless nor motherless. Mrs. B. was hopping, stout and matronly, among the apple-branches, and Mr. B. carolling his heart out in his favourite cherry-tree—where, probably, he feasted as contentedly as our friend of the gun would on lamb and green peas in the merchants' dining-rooms.

My happy family! That was my last sight of their innocent enjoyment. The same evening, two warning voices insinuated cruelly: "Your blackbirds are flown."

I denied it. Not ten minutes before, I had heard or fancied I heard their usual sleepy chirp, before

they were quiet for the night at the bottom of the hole.

“Yes, they are gone. We poked”—

“You didn’t surely poke them with a stick?”

“No!” cried the accused criminals. “But we poked a straw and then dropped a gooseberry down into their hole. We heard it fall, and not a chirp—not a stir. Now not even your blackbirds could have received such an unexpected visitor—a large, hard, green gooseberry—without giving some sign of surprise. Depend upon it, they are flown.”

They were not, though. Next morning, I both heard and saw them again, snug as ever, or so I believed. But a few hours after, taking advantage of the bright noon sunshine pouring direct on it, I looked deep down into the familiar hole. There was the nest, neat and round, and there, in the middle of it, reigning in desolate grandeur, was the large green gooseberry!

“My young family is gone!” said I, rather sadly, when, having peered in every garden-nook, and found no sign of them, I came in-doors.

“Oh, yes,” was the reply: “they left the nest an hour ago. The boy helped them out. They had got to the top of the hole, and couldn’t get further; so he just put his hand in and gave them a lift, and out they flew.”

“All four of them?”

“All four—and as big as their parents.”

“And they have not been seen about the garden anywhere?”

“Nowhere. They just got out of the nest, and away they flew.”

So that is the end of my story.

I hope my “young family” are enjoying themselves very much somewhere; that they find plenty of fruit, and worms, and sunshiny weather; above all, that they take care to keep out of the garden of my warlike neighbour who takes his early morning rambles in company with a gun. But my garden, I confess, is a little duller than it used to be; and for some weeks to come, I shall probably prefer other corners of it to that which contains the empty cradle of my Babes in the Wood.

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THE MAN OF MEN,  
ACCORDING TO OUR GREAT-GRANDMOTHERS.

CERTAIN classical works resemble ghosts—which everybody hears of, and nobody sees. How few even among their professed worshippers really know enough of the two grand idols of English literature, to stand an examination in Milton or Shakspeare—even if verbal quotations were not required, but merely a general acquaintance with the argument of the poems, the characters and plots of the plays. Also, in spite of the grandiloquent nonsense talked about the father of English verse, who but a true poet ever appreciates Chaucer? And did any reader, even a poet, fairly get through Spenser's *Faerie Queene*? Is it the blame of the public or the publishers that a late much-advertised edition of the British classics stopped at its second or third volume? Has the world grown stupider than of yore, or is it only suffering from the reaction of obstinacy, after several centuries' imposition of celebrated authors, whose works "no gentleman's library should ever be without." And seldom is; for they are usually found—*safe on the shelves*.

*How few, for instance, of the novel-readers of the*

present generation have the slightest knowledge, other than by name, of the hero of our great grandmothers—the “man of men,” as his author frequently entitles him. Who of them could answer affirmatively the simple question: “Did you ever read *Sir Charles Grandison?*”

Some may plead sarcastically: “No—but I *tried*.” Cruel condemnation! Poor Mr. Richardson, may it never reach thee in thy already-forgotten grave—and may it prove a warning to all voluminous writers depending on future as well as present celebrity! And you, ye venerable ancestresses, whose tastes were simple and whose books few, who used to adore the portly old bookseller even as the romantic maidens of to-day adore Dickens, Bulwer, Thackeray—haunt not in rustling brocades and ghostly heel-taps your degenerate descendants, because they own to have *tried* to read *Sir Charles Grandison*.

Yet the undertaking requires courage. First, to drag from dustiest, topmost shelves, or meekly request at the oldest of circulating libraries, a work—not exactly the “last new novel,” nor very likely to be “out.” Then, having carried it home,—for which purpose may be recommended a porter’s knot, or a small carpet-bag,—resolutely to open vol. I., with its yellow, grimy, torn, and mended pages—its brown antique type and eccentric spelling—its fly-leaves and margins adorned here and there with *out-of-date* calligraphy—comments on the text, or

scrawled dates and names, the owner of which may be presumed long since to scrawl no more. Something melancholy is there, even in the queernesses of this old-world book, resuscitated for the criticism of a new generation.

Let us copy the title-page:

“THE HISTORY OF SIR CHARLES GRANDISON,  
In a Series of Letters.  
By MR. SAMUEL RICHARDSON,  
Author of *Pamela* and *Clarissa*.

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In Seven Volumes.  
The Eighth Edition.

Printed for T. Longman, J. Johnson, G. G. and J. Robertson, R. Baldwin, J. Nicholls, S. Bladon, W. Richardson, W. Lane, W. Lowades, G. and T. Wilkie, P. M'Queen, C. D. Pinquenit, Cadell and Davies, and S. Bagster.”

A long list of names, of which we know absolutely nothing, except the certainty that every one of them might be found in some churchyard. Opposite — a frontispiece, representing a charming young lady in hoop, long waist, and turreted hair, stepping out of a coach, over one prostrate wounded gentleman, into the arms of another, who is magnificent in wig, queue, and sword: in coat long-vested,

long-tailed, breeches, stockings, and shoe-buckles. Behind, two other figures on horseback appear dis- coursing amiably together, with great composure, considering the circumstances, and pointing admir- ingly to the aforesaid standing gentleman. Need we doubt his identity? He is—he must be—Sir Charles Grandison.

His name at least is familiar still. It has become proverbial. Its very sound conveys images of courtesy, elegance, loyalty, chivalry; the chivalry of the era when, "during the troubles in Scotland this summer," Prince Charlie's friends died kissing the white rose at their button-holes; the loyalty with which King George and Queen Caroline, going in state to hear "the oratorios of young Mr. Handel," were regarded as beings of a superior order, in whom the divine right of kings was unquestioned and unquestionable.

To that special age does he belong—this fault- less hero, exact in all religious, moral, and social duties, blameless of life and conversation, incapable alike of breaking the smallest rule of etiquette and the Ten Commandments; rich, handsome, well born, well bred, fitted by all combinations of nature and circumstance to be the master of Grandison Hall. But we are forestalling the story—a thing not to be endured in this century-after-date criticism upon a work of which few readers may even know the general outline of the plot.

It is of the simplest kind. Harriet Byron—a lovely young Northamptonshire lady, long orphaned, but blest with a circle of adoring relatives—a grandmother Shirley, an aunt, uncle, and cousins Selby, and a godfather Deane—goes up to London, in order to avoid three lovers, and is shortly haunted by about six more. All are refused, and not unkindly, though a little saucy vanity peeps out in this provincial Helen, everybody's darling, who sets all hearts aflame. But the boldest and wickedest of the lovers, Sir Hargrave Pollexfen, carries her off, in order to compel her into matrimony. She is timely rescued by an unknown young gentleman, who conveys her home to his sisters, and wins her eternal gratitude. Of course this gratitude very speedily becomes love, for the gentleman is Sir Charles Grandison.

All is now over with our saucy little Harriet. The gradual change from girlish conceit to humility—from mischievousness to meekness—from an excellent good opinion of herself to an absorbing admiration of somebody else, is admirably done. One wonders how honest old Samuel got his accurate knowledge of girl-kind, though not of woman-kind. "The frankest of women," which she certainly is, finds her love apparently unreturned; and after various mysteries, and much "brother-and-sisterly" nonsense, which indeed all the characters are very *prone to*, Sir Charles delicately informs her of a

certain Italian lady, Clementina, who, hopelessly loving him, has gone mad for his sake, and whom he feels himself bound to marry. He tells the whole story to the girl whom he himself really loves, but dares not woo—poor Harriet Byron; and asks her advice upon it; which she gives, (good generous soul! now raised by sorrow far above all her little follies)—namely, that he should go at once and marry the Italian lady.

This situation, and a few parting scenes between the unacknowledged, honour-silenced lovers, whom all their mutual friends are longing to see united, is the finest portion of the book. Sir Charles, generous, tender, and full of knightly honour, is modesty itself towards both women, and indeed towards all the many fair ones who bestow on him their regard—he pathetically observes, poor fellow! “that he has suffered so much from *good* women;” while the fond, hapless Harriet has just pride enough to hide her affection from its object, and nobility enough to follow his lead in the cruel struggle between duty and love. Few authors have conceived a finer “position,” or maintained it more successfully.

But afterwards, interest wanes, and the story drags in a manner intolerable to modern readers, who like to gallop through three volumes of exciting fiction at the rate of a volume per hour. Conversation after conversation between Sir Charles and the *noble Italian* family, who are thankful for even

a heretic son-in-law in order to save their Clement between him and Clementina, who, loving only "Mind," (with a capital M,) refuses her beloved conscience' sake; his pleadings—her pleadings—everybody's pleadings: scene upon scene of "emotion," generosity, and woe, terminate in an agreement that the Chevalier Grandison shall be her "fourth brother" (again our author's favorite adopted relationship), and return to England: man. Upon which, nothing loath, though somewhat distracted by this "double love"—he, after an declining a third too-devoted lady, Olivia, himself to Harriet Byron—or, rather, to her & mother—and, after a whole volume full of pain and hesitation, finally marries her.

*Finally*, said we?—good Mr. Richardson! not the meaning of the word. After the main we have a volume and a quarter more. Lady Clementina, in an accession of insanity, flies to land, is met and protected by her "fourth brother" comforted by his wife, and restored to her friends with a good hope that she will neither die nor become a nun, but the wife of a faithful Italian, Emily Jervois—Sir Charles's ward, and a man of his involuntary lady-killings—also surviving marry some one else; his sisters, Lady L. and G., take a brief opportunity between the numerous weddings, to present him with a nephew and a niece; and other minor characters, bad and good.

their affairs settled. At last, the book ends quite abruptly: just as you have grown to like its lengthiness, and expect it to go on, winding and unwinding interminable histories—like life, lo, it ceases! Sir Charles and Lady Grandison—their aristocratic kin—their worthy Northamptonshire relatives—their friends and acquaintance, good and bad—all vanish into air. You close volume seven—omitting probably the 117 pages of “Index, Historical and Characteristical”—and feel that you have performed a moral duty—you have read *Sir Charles Grandison*.

Now, one asks, in what lies the charm of this book, to have become one of the remarkable facts of literature?—for such it is, and all the ridicule of Young England will never put it down. Style is not its chief merit, for it rarely rises above the epistolary-conversational, as practised in the time of our great-grandfathers and grandmothers, who certainly wrote, and may be supposed to have talked, after that pattern. As for story, the plot is slender as a thread, and transparent as daylight; from the very first volume an acute novel-reading child of twelve would guess the end.

The secret is that, with all its extravagances, or what seem so to us, the book has intense vitality. It is a picture, Pre-Raphaelite in its minuteness, of English life as existing a century ago. We feel throughout, that down to the merest accessories, the

people therein are living people: that, in spite of their "Sir," "Madam," "Best of men," "Loveliest of women"—their hoops, wigs, swords, and ruffles, they are true flesh and blood; more so than scores of the adorable women and impossible men, who yearly figure through the twenty "best novels of the season."

Rarely in any fiction does one meet with such a number of characters, all so strongly individual, and varied as nature herself. From the mere sketches, such as droll Uncle Selby, to the secondary personages, as the inimitable Charlotte Grandison, up to the all-perfect pair—she, beloved of all men, and he, admired of all women—round whom everybody else is perpetually circumvolving in attitudes of adoration—they are thorough human beings; odd as they appear in some things, one feels that one's revered ancestors of a hundred years back might—nay, must—have been just like them.

[ And for the long-windedness of the history, is not life itself long-winded? Do we not take up threads of interest, follow them awhile, drop them or lose them, find them again, and again they vanish? Alas for novelists and dramatists! few real histories furnish a complete plot—satisfactory in all its parts, with a death or marriage to wind up with. ] Life is perpetually twisting and twining, weaving and unweaving, until at last it breaks off suddenly, or we from it, and it is puzzled over no more. ] The author

of *Sir Charles Grandison* may have had neither invention nor imagination, but he certainly had the faculty of beholding life as it is, and painting it as he saw it.

And what an eye for character? Witness Charlotte Grandison, afterwards Lady G., with her loveliness, her mischief, her irresistible drollery—all but, yet never quite heartless; her half-compelled marriage with the honest, devoted Lord G.; her tormenting of him, and her struggles for matrimonial victory—till at last conscientiousness conquers, and “my fool,” “my poor creature,” becomes heartily loved as “my odd creature,” “my good man,” and the papa of “my little marmozet.” With all her naughtiness, Lady G. is the most bewitching and loveable personage in the book—worth a dozen Harriet Byrons. Clementina, the next most prominent sketch, with her romantic love, her beautiful bigotry, and ecstasy of pious self-renunciation, is, though slightly sentimental, very touching. Some bits of her madness almost remind one of Ophelia. There is an ideal loftiness and purity about her, which reconciles one to Sir Charles’s rather ridiculous position as—somebody suggests—the “ass between two bundles of hay.” You feel that his veneration for

His spirit’s mate, compassionate and wise—

“*the noblest of women,*” as he continually calls her,

is quite natural, and will never interfere with the love he bears to the "happiest of women"—his wife Harriet.

Harriet Byron, regarded as a woman, is—her sex will say—a failure. Trying to soften her angelic perfections by giving her a few foibles and "femalities"—as Uncle Selby would call them—the author sometimes makes her very much like a pretty amiable—fool. She is always trying to act "greatly," and never managing it—except in a passive sense; and though this subdued part may be necessary in point of art—query, did our author ever think of art?—one feels as if a little more were necessary, even to constitute her as moon to the hero's sun. One instinctively pictures her at forty—fair and fat—Lady Grandison of Grandison Hall—chaperoning the Misses and indulging the Masters Grandison—a little foolish sometimes, as people always admired and petted are prone to be; a little commonplace and conventional, yet most sweet and good; in short, the mirror of matronhood—whose whole life is absorbed in one belief, that the man of men—the "entire and perfect chrysolite"—is Sir Charles Grandison.

Besides its infinite variety of character, another charm of this old book is the curious and evidently exact picture it gives of the manners and customs, principles and sentiments, of a time old enough to be now nearly forgotten, yet too modern to have

become traditional or historical. We see, as before noticed, the accurate presentment of our great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers—in their daily life. They must have been at once a great deal more simple and more formal than we.

For instance, the “punctilios” of courtship and matrimony strike us moderns as particularly droll. *Love-making*—no, let us keep to the proper word—*courtship*—for anything so undignified as love seems never to be thought of—is apparently the one business of young men and young women. The latter, from their earliest youth, are educated with one end—to be married. Old maids are quite remarkable facts. Every young gentlewoman is openly attended by her suitors—her “fellows”—as Charlotte Grandison irreverently calls them—who, according to their natures, sue her, die for her, threaten her, squabble over her, and altogether keep up the sort of behaviour for which we should now call in Policeman X. or Detective Field.

For all these vagaries, *mariages de convenience* seem by no means so discreditable as we now-a-days are disposed to assert, however we may act. Fortunes and settlements are openly discussed by the most devoted couples. “Treaties”—not merely from a gentleman for a lady, but *vice versa*—are frequently set on foot by the friends of the parties. Thus, poor Sir Charles has to decline proposals for *his hand from several armoured ladies and their*

relatives. Even the modest Miss Harriet, when her sweet saucy stoniness towards mankind is conquered, and herself "entangled in a hopeless passion," does not scruple to avow it to about fifteen people, nor to take counsel from all her own relatives and those of the still silent gentleman, as to her chances of his heart. Of her own—so as he does not know it—she seems not the least ashamed; for, as she naïvely observes, "Is not the man Sir Charles Grandison?"

The odd mixture of freedom and formality pervades everything. Young ladies, married after a fortnight's wooing, snub their unfortunate husbands for daring to beg or steal a kiss in presence of the waiting-woman. Young gentlemen, a day or two before marriage, while actually venturing in the retirement of the "cedar parlour" upon the above terrible enormity, still address the lady as "Madam," "Dearest Madam," "My beloved Miss Byron." Husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, never call one another by anything but their titles—as "Sir Charles," "Lady L.," "My Lord G.;" and never, even in moments of the deepest emotion, forget to bow over one another's hands.

This queer incongruity affects us with an amused wonderment. We pause to consider whether we have grown wiser or more foolish than our progenitors; and also what our "dear distant descendants" will think of our manners and customs, modes of action and

tone of feeling—as portrayed in those present-day novels which shall survive the century. And here judging them by the only secure test of permanent fame—accurate, unexaggerated nature—the same in all ages, though modified by the outward impress of the time—we cannot but suspect that their number will be few; that many very clever and amusing popularities of to-day, will slip into utter oblivion to-morrow, or be preserved as mere caricatures, and laughed at quite as much as we now laugh at Sir Charles Grandison.

The book itself may move our risibility, but the hero himself never. With all the flourish of trumpets that heralds him—the perpetual chorus of praise that is dinned into our ears about him—the raptures that all his friends go into concerning everything he is and does and says, and the slightly “priggish” (oh, could he have heard the slang word!) way in which he himself is perpetually uttering grand moral sentiments, and perfectly conscious of every good action he performs—still, we are compelled to own that Sir Charles Grandison justifies the universal adoration—that he really is the man of men.

Thoroughly noble, just, and generous; pure through the temptations of a licentious time; asserting true honour against all the shams of it then current; polite without insincerity; pious without either intolerance or cant; severe in virtue, yet pitiful to the most vicious; faithful to his friends, and forgiving to his enemies, till his last foe is conquered by the force

of kindness; loved by all women, admired by all men, yet never losing a sweet humility, which coming out as it does at times to his nearest ties—his revered Dr. Bartlett and his beloved Harriet—must, we feel assured, be always his before his God. The marvel is how the little fat bookseller whom nobody ever accuses of genius, could have conceived such an ideal of a true Christian gentleman.

Hear what he says himself on the subject—worthy Samuel—whom a late serial tale has pictured in his habit as he lived, strutting through Tunbridge streets with a bevy of admiring womankind following the creator of Sir Charles Grandison.

“The editor of the foregoing collection has the more readily undertaken to publish it” [amiable pretence] “because he thinks human nature has often of late been shown in a light too degrading; and he hopes, from this series of letters, it will be seen that characters may be good without being unnatural. .... Notwithstanding, it has been observed by some, that, in general, Sir Charles Grandison approaches too near to the faultless character which critics censure as being above nature. Yet it ought to be observed, too, that he performs no one action which it is not in the power of any man in his situation to perform; and that he checks and restrains himself in no one instance in which it is not the duty of a prudent and good man to restrain himself.”

*Excellently and truthfully argued, dear old Samuel.*

No one can read thy musty old tomes without the conviction that thy stout body must have enclosed a greater, purer, more Christian soul than the be-wigged lords and high-heeled ladies who sailed down Tunbridge streets, the clever wits and satirical or sentimental poets that enlivened London—nay, even the admired Dr. Johnson himself, ever dreamed of.

It is curious to trace how simple amid an age of formalities—how liberal in the most ultra days of bigoted religionism—is this old man's ideal of goodness, as presented in his hero: how he makes him pardon the cruellest injuries, treat kindly the lowest of the low, hold out repentance and atonement to the vilest of the vile; in all things pursuing a direct course; being, as he says, “a law unto himself,” amenable only to his Maker, and afraid of nothing except to sin against his Maker. In his actions, as in his character, as son, brother, friend, husband—fulfilling, instinctively as it were, the one law of true love and true loveableness, “esteeming others better than himself”—he is the noblest of all fictitious heroes, ancient or modern, with whom we are acquainted.

Curious, too, to see how far in advance of his age, in some things, is this Sir Charles Grandison, or rather Mr. Samuel Richardson, who, in the “concluding note,” goes on to say, with reference to a

special point in the book and in the character of the hero:

"It has been objected by some persons, that a man less able by strength or skill to repel an affront than Sir Charles appears to have been, could not, with such honour, have extricated himself out of difficulties on refusing a challenge. And this is true, meaning by *honour* the favourable opinion of the European world from the time of its being overrun by Gothic barbarism down to the present. But as that notion of honour is evidently an absurd and mischievous one, and yet multitudes are at a loss to get over it, the rejection and confutation of it by a person whom it was visible the consideration of his own safety did not influence, must surely be of no small weight. And when it is once allowed that there are cases when these polite *invitations to murder*" [bravo, Samuel!] "may, consistently with honour, be disregarded, a little attention will easily find others: vulgar notions will insensibly wear out, and more ground be gained by degrees than could have been attempted with hope of success at once; till at length all may come to stand on the firm footing of reason and religion. In the mean time, they who are less qualified to carry off right behaviour with honour in the eye of common judges, will, however, be esteemed for it by every serious and prudent person, and perhaps, inwardly, by many who are mean enough to *join* outwardly in blaming them."

A bold doctrine to set forth, in the year 1796—the date of this seventh edition. The first edition must have somewhat astonished the “gentlemen” of the period.

Great indeed must have been the influence of this book in its day—a day when all new books, and especially novels, were comparatively rare. It appeared originally in serial volumes; and Sir John Herschel has somewhere related that when the penultimate volume, containing the marriage of Sir Charles and his Harriet, reached a certain enthusiastic English village, the inhabitants immediately set all the bells a-ringing! In any case, it is easy to imagine its universal notoriety; how the “fine gentlemen” read it over their chocolate, and the ladies over the dressing of their hair; how even young gentlewomen of tender age were allowed to sit poring over it in old-fashioned gardens or upon prim high-backed chairs; for it was notable then, as now, as being one of the few fictions of the time which contains nothing objectionable. There is hardly a word in it that we, more sensitive if not more really modest than our great-grandmothers, would scruple to read aloud to our sons and daughters.

The former—bless the lads!—if at all given to “fast” ways and satirical young Englandism, might probably make a great mock at this dignified, decorous, bowing and hand-kissing, reverently *behaved and pure-minded* young gentleman of a past

century; who is not ashamed to honour his parents—even a bad father—to love his sisters, and to respect all women; who, a few days before marriage, can say to his wife—alas! you poor lads, how few of you will be able to say it to *your* wives; and yet the sentence ought to be written in golden letters upon every one of your consciences, for it is the utmost glory of manhood:

“Give me leave to boast—it *is* my boast—that I can look back on my past life, and bless God that I never, from childhood to manhood, *wilfully* gave pain to either the motherly or sisterly heart, nor from manhood to the present hour, to any other woman.”

But whatever the boys might feel, we are certain our girls would be, every one of them, in love with Sir Charles Grandison.

Heaven help us! are good men become so rare, that the mere presentment of such in a book is to be scoffed at by many, and regarded by almost all as unnatural and impossible? a merely good man, not one whit better (as the author himself suggests) than all good men ought to be? We believe not. We believe that neither in this, nor in the past generation, are honour and virtue left without a witness, without many witnesses. Men, not altogether perfect; the ideal must always be a step beyond the real, or it is no ensample at all; but honest men and *true*, who, taking up such a tale as this, need neither

blush nor deride as they read; for people very often take refuge in derision when an inward stinging of conscience tells them they ought to blush.

And since on the *mothers* of a generation depends much of its future glory, it lies in the power of the mothers of ours to cultivate in their boys all that Sir Charles Grandison's dying mother so proudly praises:

“His duty to his father and to me; his love of his sisters; the generosity of his temper; his love of truth; his modesty, courage, benevolence, steadiness of mind, docility, and other great and amiable qualities, by which he gives a moral assurance of making A GOOD MAN.”

Observe, not a great man, a clever and brilliant man, a prosperous or fortunate man—simply a *good man*. If women took this more to heart, haply there would not now-a-days be so many sons who wring and break the hearts of their mothers.

But whether or no there be living good men, a novel with a good man so nobly depicted therein is in itself a great reality; for an abstract truth learnt from fiction is often a clearer and more absolute verity than a mere literal fact. As a reverent orthodox Christian was once heard to say, Christianity would be none the less true, in its essence, if the whole of the New Testament history were an inspired parable.

*So whether or not he is, or ever can be, a living  
Studies from Life.*

possibility, we feel that, as an example of moral beauty, this man of men is, according to the well-known phrase, "not for an age, but for all time;" that, in spite of lengthinesses, absurdities, extravagances, some belonging to the period, and some to the author's own idiosyncrasy—this history is valuable and veritable. Hundreds of our young men and maidens who stupefy their brains, fire their all too tindery imaginations, and confuse their still unsettled notions of right and wrong, over a heterogeneous mass of modern novels, would be none the worse, but all the better, for hunting out this old-fashioned tale, and carefully studying the character of that almost forgotten ideal of our great grandmothers—Sir Charles Grandison.

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## LOST.

LOOKING over the *Times'* advertisements, one's eye often catches such as the following:—"Lost, a Youth" (while ships and schools exist, not so very mysterious); "Missing, an Elderly Gentleman" (who has apparently walked quietly off to his City-office one morning, and never been heard of more).—Or merely, "Left his Home, John So-and-So," who, after many entreaties to return thereto, may have the pleasure of seeing, by succeeding advertisements of "Reward Offered," whether he is valued by his disconsolate kindred at ten, fifteen, or fifty pounds. Other "bits" there are, at which we feel it cruel to smile: one, for instance, which appeared for months on the first day of the month, saying: "If you are not at home by" such a date, "I shall have left England in search of you;" and proceeding to explain that he or she had left orders for that periodical advertisement; giving also addresses of banker, &c., in case of the other's coming home meantime; all with the curiously business-like, and yet pathetic, providing against all chances, which rarely springs from any source save the strongest attachment.

*All newspaper readers must have noticed, in mys-*

terious accidents or murders, what numbers of people are sure to come forward in hopes of identifying the unknown "body." In a late case, when a young woman was found brutally shot in a wood, it was remarkable how many came from all parts of the country to view the corpse—persons who had missing relatives bearing the same initials as those on the victim's linen—parents whose daughter had gone to service and then been entirely lost sight of—friends with a friend gone to meet her husband, and embark for Australia, but who had never embarked or been heard of again; and so on; all seeking some clue to a mournful, never-solved mystery.

But these things suggest the grave reflection—what a number of people there must be in the world who are, not figuratively or poetically, but literally, "*lost*;" who by some means or other, accident, intention, carelessness, misfortune, or crime, have slipped out of the home circle, or the wider round of friendship or acquaintanceship, and never reappeared more; whose place has gradually been filled up; whose very memory is almost forgotten, and against whose name and date of birth in the Family Bible—if they ever had a family and a Bible—stands neither the brief momentous annotation "*Married*," &c., nor the still briefer, and often much safer and happier inscription, "*Died*,"—nothing save the ominous, pathetic blank, which only the unveiled secrets of *the Last Day* will ever fill up.

In the present times, when everybody is running to and fro—when, instead of the rule, it is the exception to meet with any untravelled person—when almost every large family has one or more of its members scattered in several quarters of the civilised or uncivilised world—cases such as these must occur often. Indeed, nearly every person's knowledge or experience could furnish some. What a list it would make!—worse, if possible, than the terrible “List of Killed and Wounded” which dims with pity many an uninterested eye; or the “List of Passengers and Crew,” after an ocean-shipwreck, where common sense forebodes that “missing” must necessarily imply death—how met, God alone knows!—yet—to the last comfort of survivors—a safe, sure, and speedy death. But in this unwritten list of “lost,” death is a certainty never to be attained; not even when such certainty would be almost as blessed as life, or happy return. Perhaps even more blessed.

For in these cases, the “lost” are not alone to be considered. By that strange yet merciful contradiction of feeling which often makes the reckless the most loveable, and the foward the most beloved, it rarely happens that the most Cain-like vagabond that wanders over the face of the earth, has not some human being who cares for him—in greater or less degree, yet still cares for him. Nor, abjuring *this view of the subject*, can we take the strictly

practical side of it, without perceiving that it is next to impossible for any human being so completely to isolate himself from his species, that his life or death shall not affect any other human being in any possible way.

Doubtless, many persuade themselves of this fact, through bravado or misanthropy, or the thoughtless selfishness which a wandering life almost invariably superinduces. They maintain the doctrine which, when a man has been tossed up and down the world, in India, America, Australia, in all sorts of circumstances and among all sorts of people, he is naturally prone to believe the one great truth of life—"Every man for himself, and God for us all." But it is not a truth; it is a lie. Where every man lives only for himself, it is not God, but the devil—"for us all."

It is worth while, in thinking of those who are thus voluntarily "lost," to suggest this to the great tide of our emigrating youth, who go—and God speed them if they go honestly—to make in a new country the bread they cannot find here. In all the changes of work and scene, many are prone gradually to forget; some to believe themselves forgotten; home fades away in distance—letters grow fewer and fewer. The wanderer begins to feel himself a waif and stray. Like Dickens's poor Jo, he has got into a habit of being "chivied and chivied," and *kept* "moving on," till he has learned to feel no

particular tie or interest in anybody or anything, and therefore concludes nobody can have any tie or interest in him. So he just writes home by rare accident, when he happens to remember it, or never writes at all; vanishes slowly from everybody's reach, or drops suddenly out of the world; nobody knows how, or when, or where; nor ever can know, till the earth and sea give up their dead—

But long they looked, and feared, and wept,  
Within his distant home,  
And dreamed, and started as they slept,  
For joy that he was come.

Alas, how many a household, how many a heart, has borne that utterly irremediable and interminable anguish, bitterer far than the anguish over a grave, which Wordsworth has faintly indicated in *The Affliction of Margaret*:

Where art thou, my beloved son?  
Where art thou, worse to me than dead?  
Oh, find me—prosperous or undone!  
Or if the grave be now thy bed,  
Why am I ignorant of the same,  
That I may rest, and neither blame  
Nor sorrow may attend thy name?

I look for ghosts, but none will force  
Their way to me. 'Tis falsely said  
That there was ever intercourse  
Betwixt the living and the dead,  
For surely then I should have sight  
Of him I wait for day and night,  
With love and longings infinite.

It may seem a small lesson to draw from an agony so great; but surely one cannot too strongly

impress upon our wandering youth, who go to earn their living across the seas—in the Australian bush, or the Canadian forests, or the greater wildernesses of foreign cities, east and west—that they ought everywhere and under all circumstances to leave a clue whereby their friends may be certain to hear of them, living or dead. That if it is the duty of a solitary man or woman, while living, so to arrange affairs that his or her death shall cause least pain or trouble to any one else—surely this is tenfold the duty of those who go abroad: that whatever happens, they may be to those that love them only the dead, never the “lost.”

Sometimes under this category come persons of totally different fate—and yet the same—whose true history is rarely found out till it is ended, and perhaps not then. People who have sprung up, nobody knows how, who have nobody belonging to them—neither ancestors nor descendants—though as soon as they are gone hundreds appear to claim heirship with them.

Of such is a case now pending, well known in the west of Scotland, when the “next of kin” to an almost fabulous amount of property is advertised for by government, once in seven years; and where scores of Scotch cousins indefinitely removed, periodically turn up, and spend hundreds of pounds in proving, or failing to prove—for all have failed hitherto—their relationship to the “dear deceased”

—an old gentleman in India, who neither there nor in his native Scotland had a single soul belonging to him, or caring to “call cousins” with him; who, indeed, had never been heard of till he died, worth a million or so, leaving all the wealth he had laboured to amass—to—Nobody. Truly this poor solitary nabob may be put among the melancholy record of “lost.”

Similar instances of fortunes, greater or less, “going a-begging” for want of heirs, are common enough—commoner than people have the least idea of. Government annually pockets—very honestly, and after long search and patient waiting—a considerable sum, composed of unclaimed bank dividends, and real and personal property of all kinds, the heir or heirs to which it is impossible to find. Among these, the amount of dead sailors’ pay is said to be a remarkable item—thousands of pounds thus yearly lapsing to government, because all the ingenuity of the shipping-master, into whose hands the money is required to be paid, cannot find any heir to poor departed “Bill” or “Jack”—whose place of birth has likely been never heard of—who has gone under so many aliases that even his right surname is scarcely discoverable, and often has lived, died, and been buried as simple “Jack” or “Bill,” without any surname at all.

This indifference to an hereditary patronymic is a curious characteristic of all wanderers of the lowe

class. Soldiers, sailors, and navvies engaged abroad, will often be found to have gone by half-a-dozen different surnames, or to have allowed their original name to be varied *ad libitum*, as from Donald to McDonald, and back again to Donaldson, possibly ending as O'Donnell, or plain Don. Frequently, in engaging themselves, they will give any new name that comes uppermost—Smith, Brown, Jones: or will change names with a “mate”—after the German fashion of ratifying the closest bond of friendship—thereby producing inextricable confusion, should they chance to die, leaving anything to be inherited.

Otherwise—of course it matters not. They just drop out of life, of no more account than a pebble dropped into the deep sea. And yet each must have had parents, may have had brothers and sisters, might have had wife, and children, and all the close links of home. Much as we pity those who lose all these—the bonds, duties, and cares which, however heavy sometimes, are a man's greatest safeguard and strength, without which he is but a rootless tree, a dead log drifted about on the waters—still more may we pity those, in all ranks and positions of life, who are thus “lost.” Not in any discreditable sense, perhaps from no individual fault; but from some fatal conjuncture of circumstances, or from being “too easy,” “too good,” “nobody's enemy but their own.” Still, by some means or

other—God help them!—they have let themselves drop out of the chain of life, like a bead dropped off a string, and are “lost.”

Equally so are some, of whom few of us are so happy as never to have counted any—whom the American poet Bryant, already quoted, touchingly characterises as “the living lost.” Not the fallen, the guilty, or even the prodigal, so degraded that only at the gates of the grave and from One Father can he look for that forgiveness to grant which, “*while he was yet afar off, his Father saw him.*” Not only these, but others who bear no outward sign of their condition; whom the world calls fortunate, happy, righteous—and so they may be towards many, yet to a few, familiar with their deepest hearts, knowing all they were and might have been, still are irrevocably, hopelessly, “the living lost.” Lost as utterly as if the grave had swallowed them up, mourned as bitterly as one mourneth for those that depart to return no more.

Everybody owns some of these; kindred, whom prosperity has taught that “bluid” is *not* “thicker than water;” friends who have long ceased to own aught of friendship but its name—perhaps even not that; lovers who meet accidentally as strangers; brothers and sisters who pass one another in the street with averted faces—the same faces which a few years back “cuddled” cosily up to the same mother’s breast.

These things are sad—sad and strange; so strange, that we hardly believe them in youth, at least not as possible to happen to us; and yet they do happen, and we are obliged to bear them. Obliged to endure losses worse than death, and never seem as if we had lost anything—smilingly to take the credit of possessions that we know are no longer ours—or quietly to close accounts, pay an honourable dividend, cheat nobody, and sit down, honest beggars—but the crash is over! Most of us—as at the end of the year we are prone, morally as well as arithmetically, to calculate our havings and spendings, and strike the balance of our property—are also prone—and it may be good for us too—to linger a little over the one brief item, “Lost.”

But in all good lives, even as in all well-balanced, prudent ledgers, this item is far less heavy, in the sum-total, than at first appears. Ay, though therein we have to reckon deaths many, partings many, infidelities and estrangements not a few; though, if we be not ourselves among the list of the lost, we have no guarantee against being numbered among that of the sorrowful losers.

The most united family may have to count among its members one “black sheep,” pitied or blamed, and by a few lingeringly loved; returning at intervals, generally to everybody’s consternation and pain; at last returning no more. The faith-

fullest of friends may come one day to look in his friend's face—and detect there something new and strange, which he shrinks from as from an unholy spirit which has entered and possessed the familiar form. The fondest and best of mothers may live to miss, silently and tearlessly, from her Christmas-table, some one child—whom she knows, and knows that all her other children know, is more welcome in absence than in presence, whom to have laid sinless in a baby's coffin, and buried years ago, would have been as nothing—nothing.

Yet all these things must be, and we must bear them, that in the mysterious working of evil with good, we may come out purified as with fire. The comfort is that, in its total account of gains and losses, every honest and tender soul will find out, soon or late, that the irremediable catalogue of the latter is, we repeat, far lighter than at first seems.

For, who are the "lost?" Not the dead, who "rest from their labours," and with whom to die is often to be for ever beloved. Not the far-away, who, keeping and kept in fond remembrance, are often nearer than those who sit at hearth and board beside us. Not even the temporarily estranged—for faith and patience will often bring them back again, and teach us

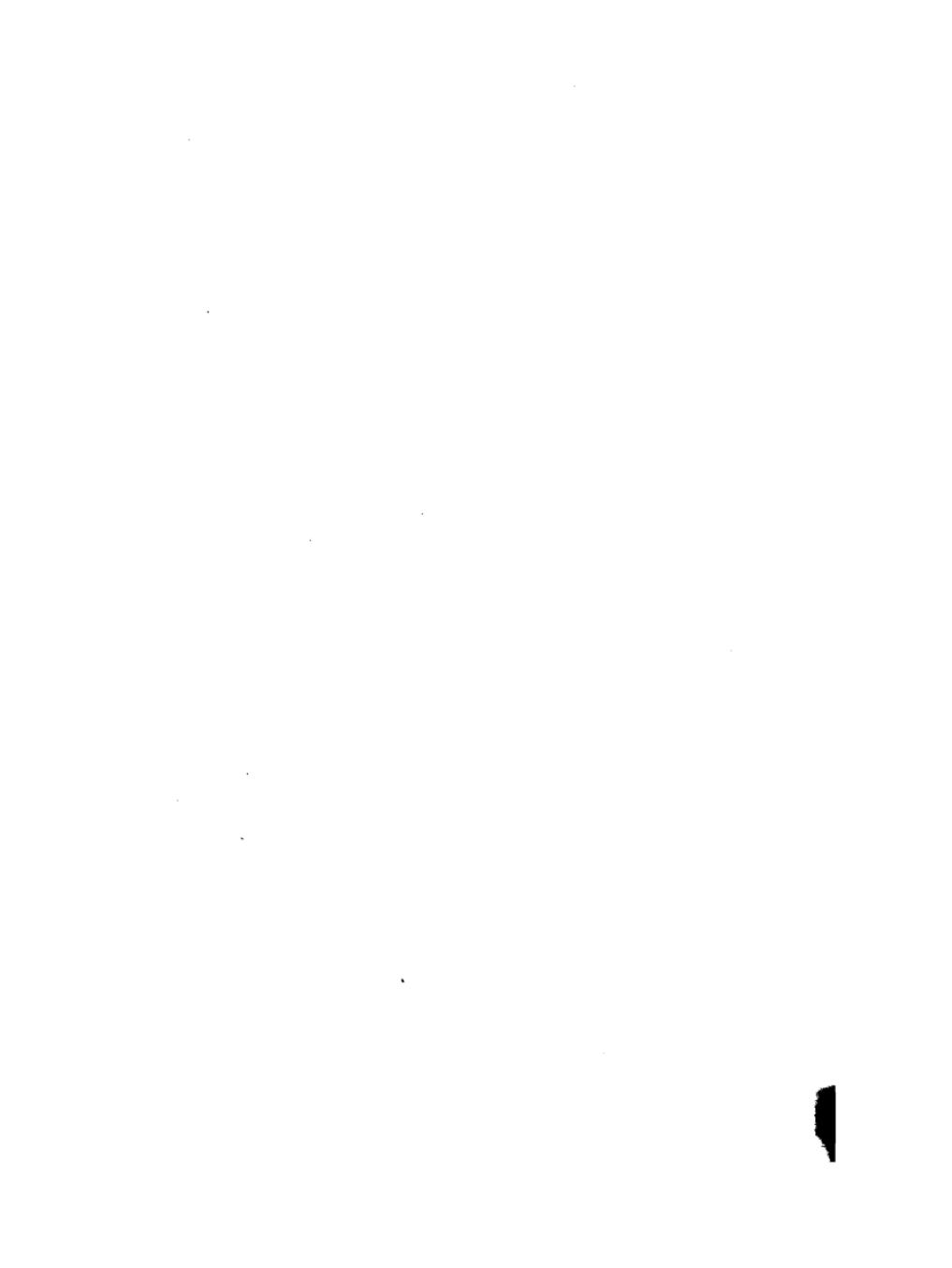
"How like a new gift is old love restored ;  
How seems it richer, though the very same."

Never need those fear to be either lost or losers who, in the words of our English Prayerbook, can pray—and pray together—that “amidst all the chances and changes of this mortal life, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found.” Where, whatever may be the “tongue of men or of angels” that we shall have learned to speak with, then we may be quite sure that there shall be in it no such word as “*lost*.”

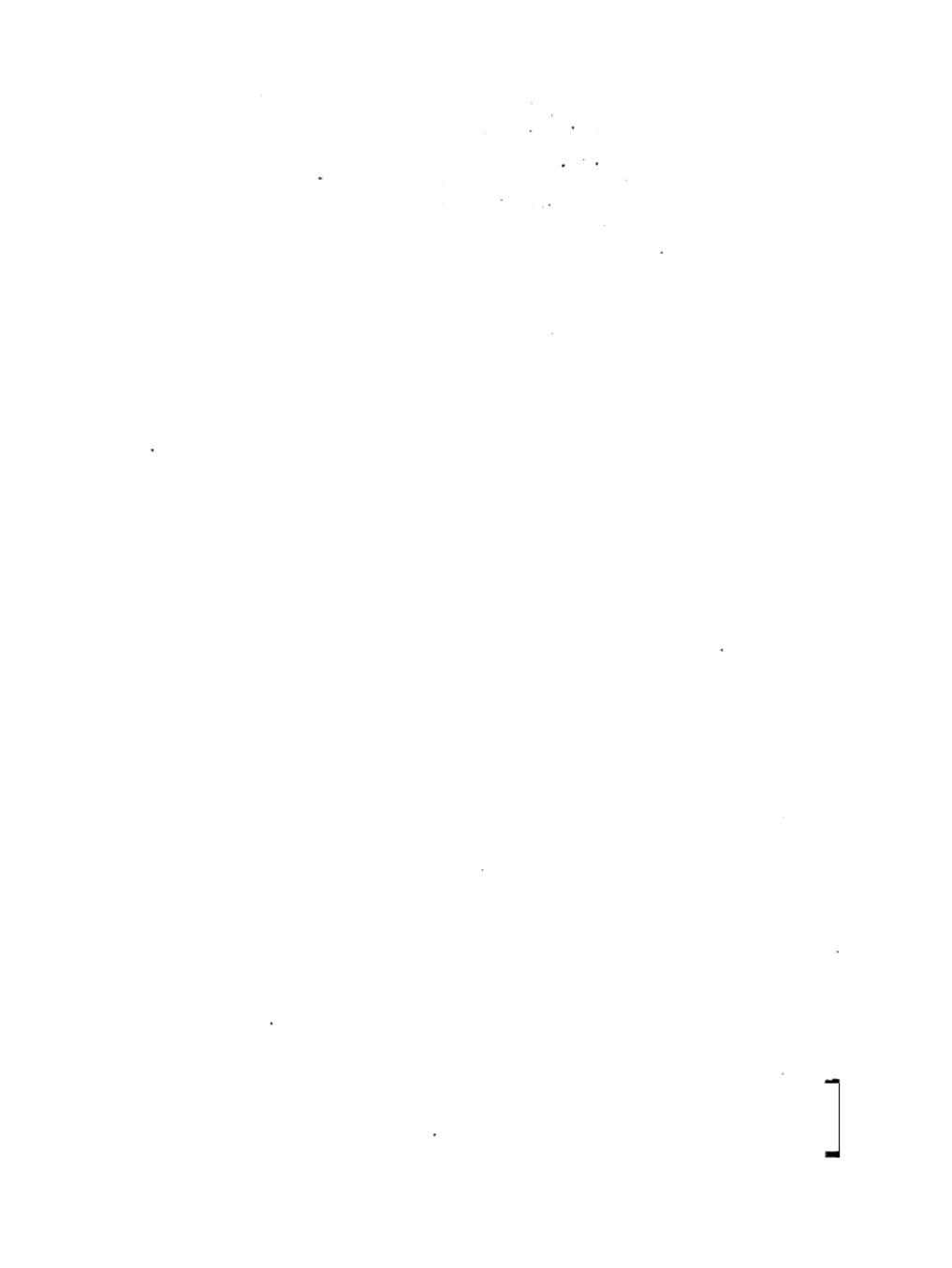
THE END.



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